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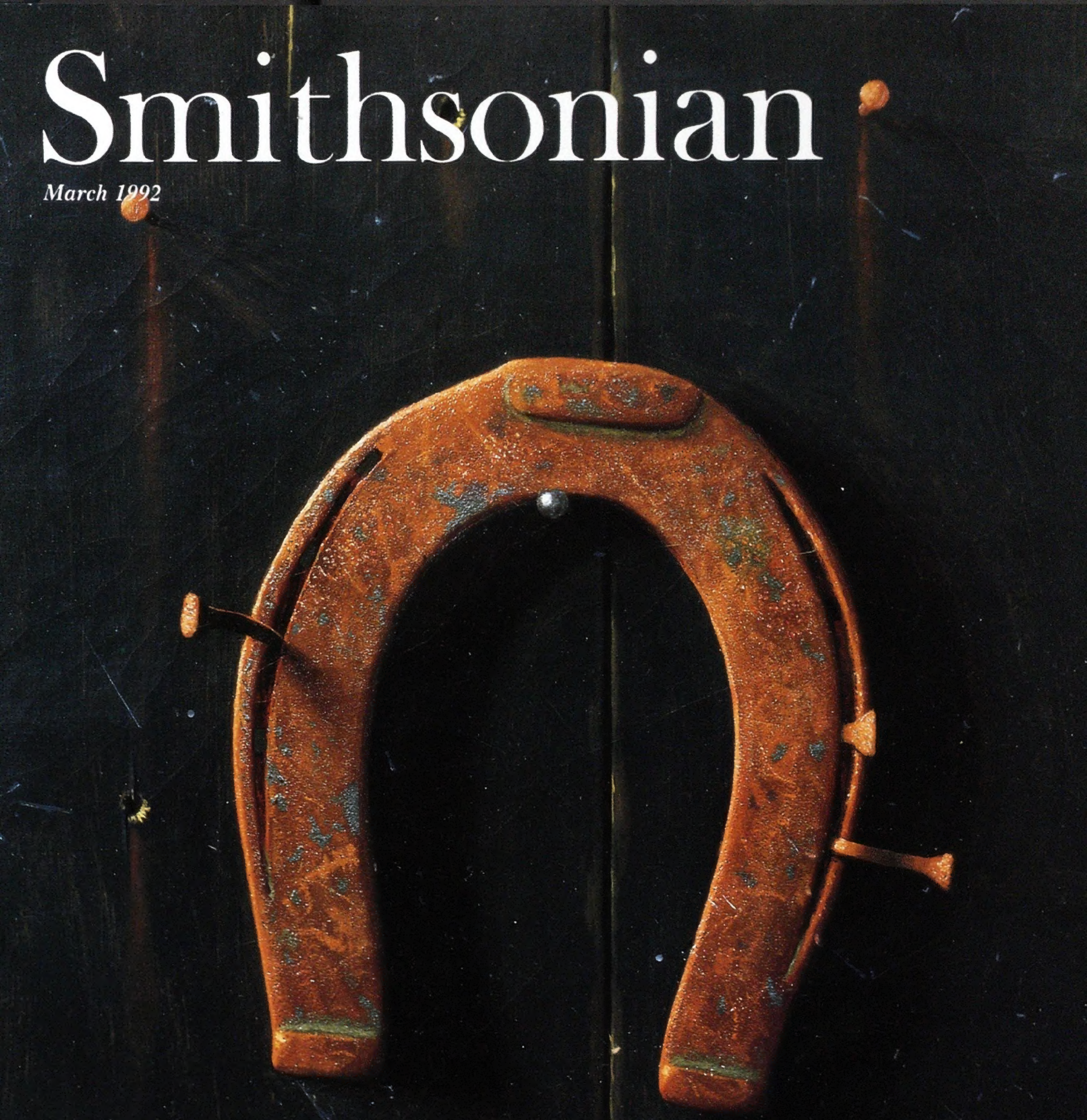
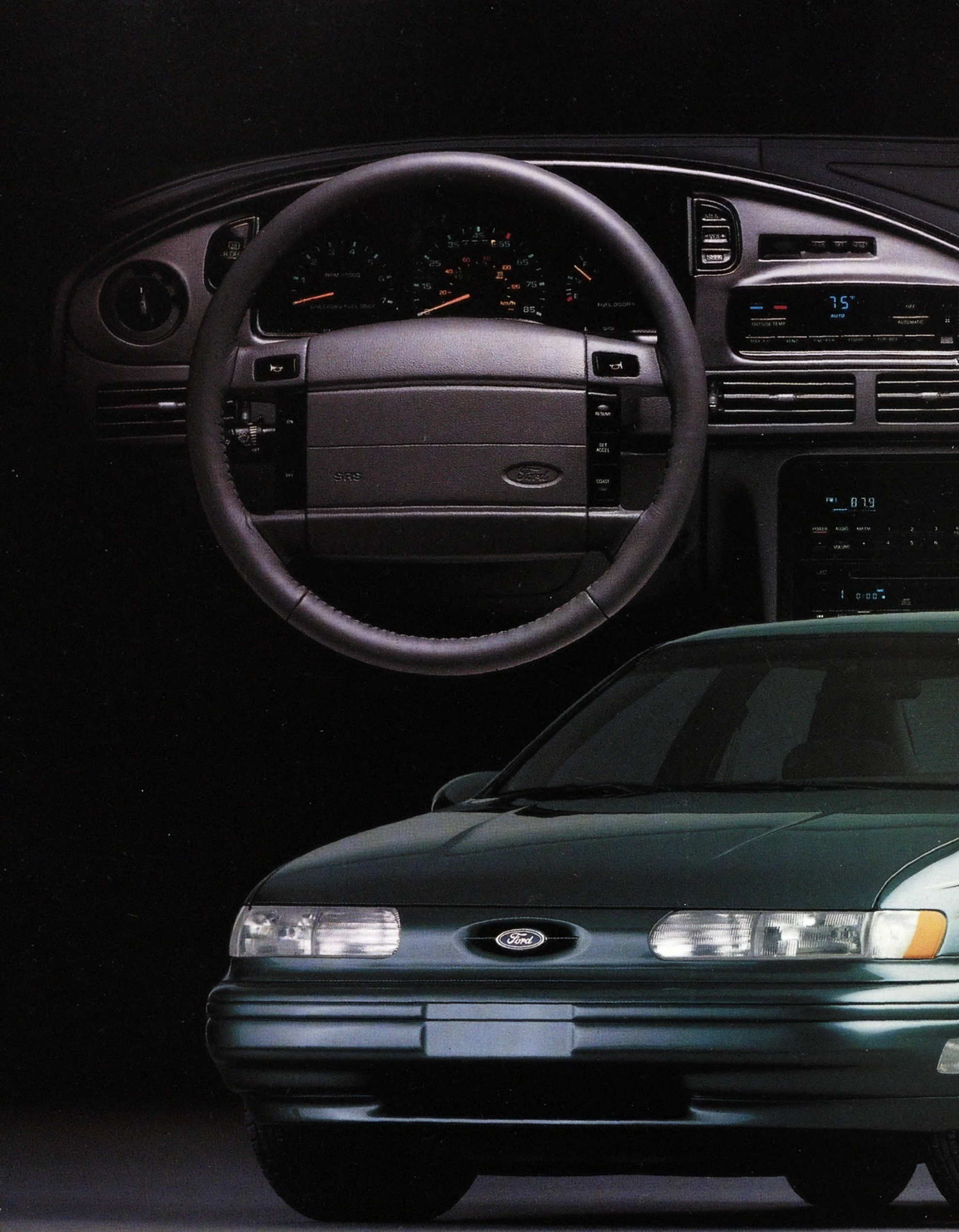


William Harnett's art

A century later, it still fools our eyes (p. 52)



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Smithsonian (ISSN 0037-7333) is published monthly by the Smithsonian Associates, 900 Jefferson Drive, Washington, DC 20560.
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Subscription price $20 a year in U.S. and possessions, $33 elsewhere. 80 percent of dues is designated for magazine subscription. Single copy price, $3. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC and additional mailing offices.
Editorial offices at 900 Jefferson Drive, Washington, DC 20560.
Advertising and circulation offices at 420 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10170.
Members: Please address all subscription correspondence and change of address information to Smithsonian, P.O. Box 55593, Boulder, CO 80322-5593.
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Smithsonian horizons

Can we find a way to balance the survival of endangered species with the livelihoods of people?

The world's ongoing loss of biodiversity is a grave and growing threat to the natural patrimony the human race inherited from the whole evolutionary history of life on Earth. For our children and theirs, if not for ourselves, the squandering of living resources in which we are now so widely and wantonly engaged jeopardizes not merely the future quality of life but quite possibly the adequacy and security of our food supply. Yet the issue is so complex and all-encompassing that organized society seems able to come to grips with only extremely localized segments of it.

The gross number of different kinds of existing organisms should be the starting point for calculating the current rate of loss, but unfortunately cannot readily serve this purpose. Names and descriptions of varying degrees of completeness are available for some 1.4 million species. About 250,000 plants and 44,000 vertebrates are included within this number, and it is thought that not yet recognized species will add only modestly to these totals. But when we turn to invertebrates, insects, fungi and other organisms and microorganisms of various kinds, estimates of what we do not know vary by at least a full order of magnitude.

The incompleteness of our knowledge is worst in the tropics—which also happens to be the locus both of the greatest biodiversity and of the most alarming rate of loss of it. Currently identified for the tropics is a total of only some 400,000 species, while estimates of the real total range from a low of perhaps three million to ten times that number of insects alone.

Especially at risk of accelerating rates of destruction are tropical forests. Small-scale clearings are not easily detected with satellite imagery, but even the larger ones that can be plotted in this way alone account for the destruction of 160,000 to 200,000 square kilometers annually, out of an estimated total of 7.7 million extant in 1990. This rate of removal climbed 50 percent in the decade of the '80s and may continue to climb. On the hopeful but unrealistic assumption that it will not, less than 10 percent of the much reduced present total will still remain a generation from now.

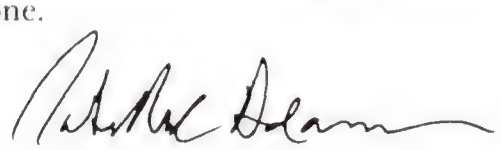
The focus on numbers of species is understandable. Each is an evolutionary achievement of at least as permanent and irreducible importance as any book in a great library. Some hold prospects of diversifying and strengthening the long-term adequacy of our dietary intake, or of furnishing important new chemicals, medicines or other biologically active products. Moreover, people feel an immediate sense of loss when faced with the prospect of the early disappearance of a particular species.

This is particularly the case with a large and dominant vertebrate at the head of a food chain. The deprivation may be mainly symbolic (as in the case of Montana grizzlies), or it may additionally threaten a delectable food source (as in the case of the Chinook and sockeye salmon in the Columbia River basin). Interest is even keener when it can be focused on individual animals, as testified by the tens of millions of dollars that have been spent on reintroducing a handful of California condors into the wild and on saving sea otters after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill in Alaska. Under our Endangered Species Act, up for renewal in Congress this year, it is accordingly no surprise that the perceived threat to an individual species was chosen as the trigger for protective measures.

In a deeper sense, however, it is the danger of attenuation and loss in ecosystems that should more generally be of concern to us. To be sure, heroic measures of conservation sometimes may succeed in overriding general patterns. But as the Smithsonian's work on tropical-forest fragments in the greater Amazon basin has helped to show, the uppermost elements in food chains are always highly sensitive to a reduction in the contiguous area of a particular habitat, such as a rain forest (SMITHSONIAN, April 1988). And in the Pacific Northwest, the spotted owl is really just the somewhat accidental fulcrum on which a legislative lever can be turned in order to protect from clear-cutting significant areas of old-growth forests.

Herein lies a dangerous and divisive irony. People's current livelihoods are at stake when lumbering operations are shut down so that old-growth forest may be conserved for future generations. At least parts of the formidable coalition eating away at the Amazon rain forests are small farmers seeking bare subsistence. Who is entitled to set priorities that bar them? At what point (if any) could action to protect a species constitute a taking away of individual property rights? Is there no better way to respond to the larger biodiversity crisis, and to protect against the loss of critical ecosystems in this country and elsewhere, than to pit endangered individual species of plants or animals against the livelihoods of people?

I have no answer. But we may need to find one.



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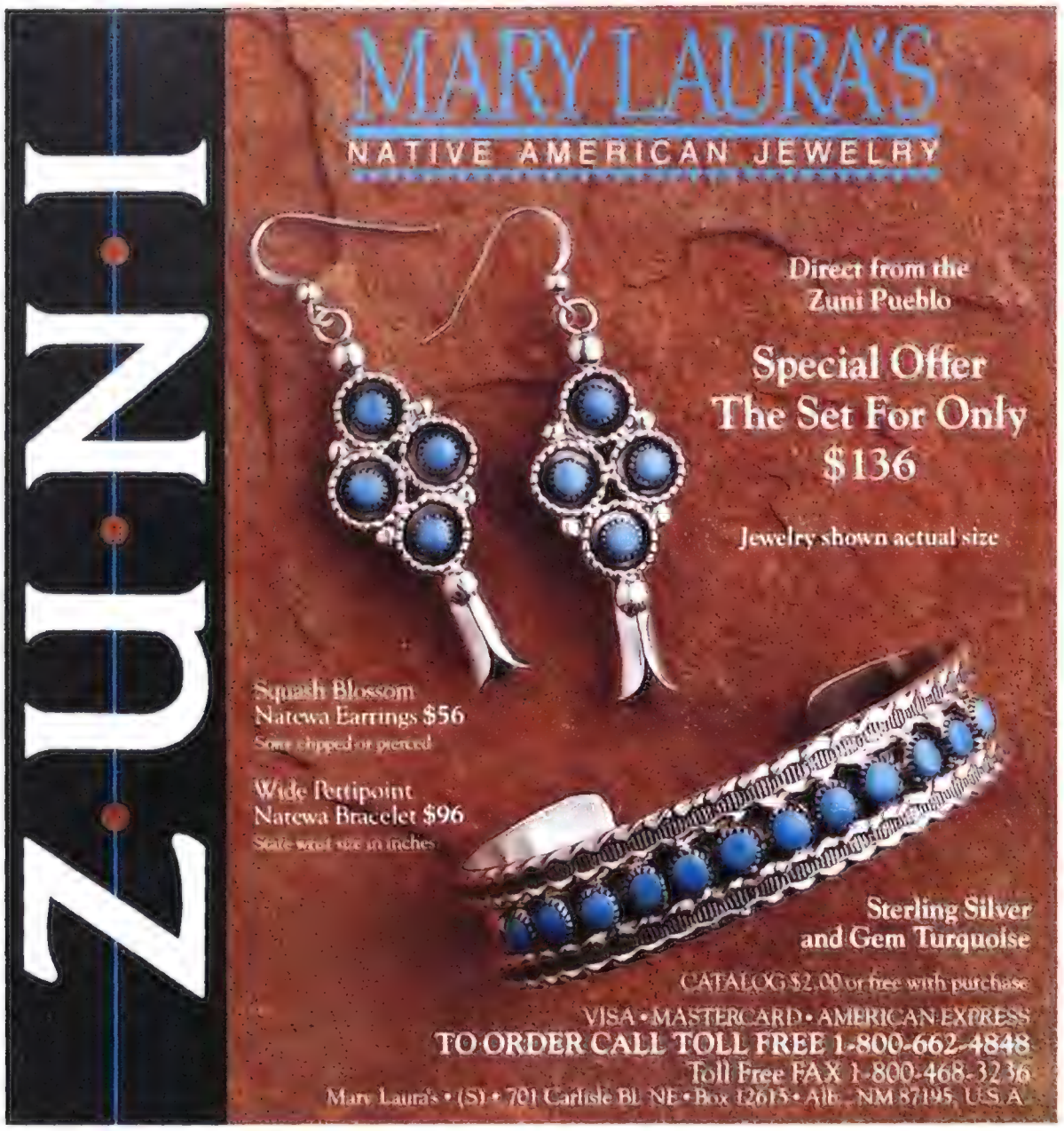
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Letters to the Editor

Canine Companions

Dear Sir: Your January article on CCI is but one extraordinary example in the ever-expanding world of animal-assisted activities. Dogs, cats, rabbits, birds, horses; even monkeys [SMITHSONIAN, October 1986] have been miracle workers. They visit patients in hospitals and can be used in therapy. Their presence and nonthreatening friendliness boost the energy level in nursing facilities and adult day care centers. And they can be magic for children's therapy.

I know firsthand how effective and wonderful animals can be in a hospital setting; I was once on the receiving end. That experience was instrumental in turning my life around. And so I have recently completed a two-year program and am taking the national examination to become an occupational therapist's assistant. Of course, I plan to use animal-assisted activities.

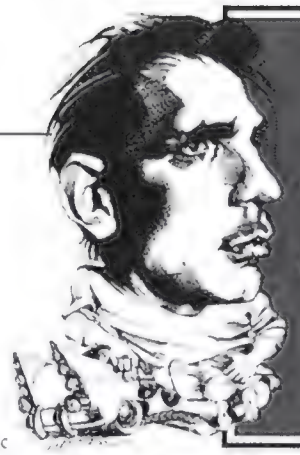
Joy York
Los Angeles

Dear Sir: The CCI program sounds like a wonderful match of humans with needs and loyal canines ready and able to meet those needs.

But what becomes of the two-thirds of the puppies considered unqualified to participate in the program? When CCI founder Bonita Bergin was struggling to get the program off the ground in the 1970s, finding qualified dogs on a trial-and-error basis, what were the fates of those that didn't make the grade? Of those with a genetic deficiency that rendered them unqualified for service?

Nancy J. Winkley
Indianapolis

There are three routes for dogs re-



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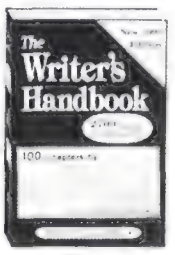

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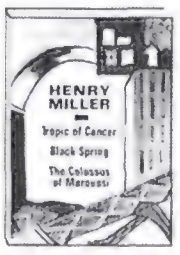

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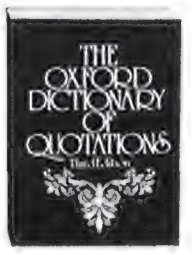

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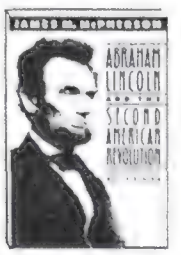

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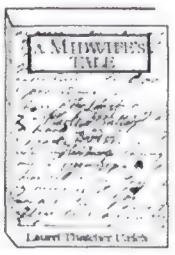

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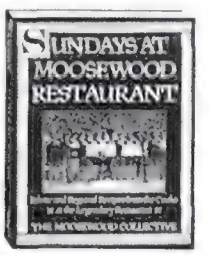

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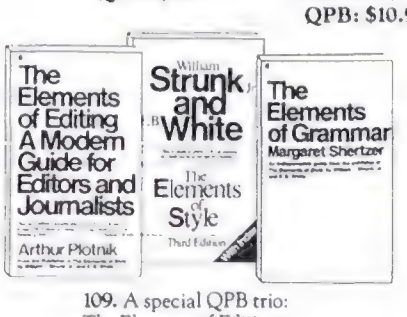
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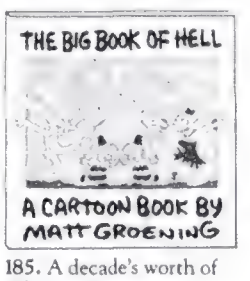

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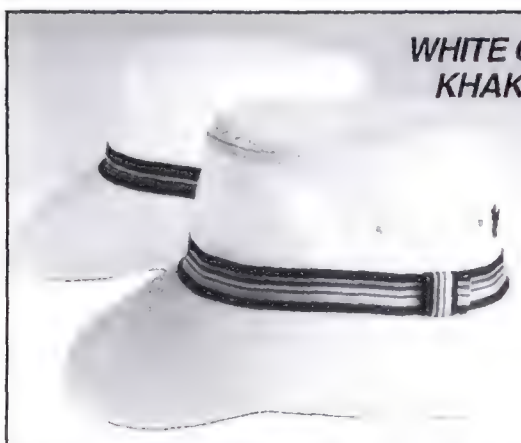
Dear Sir: During the past 20 years the creative use of dogs in a number of areas has increased considerably. They aid law enforcement with their ability to detect drugs, bombs and food contraband [SMITHSONIAN, June 1987], find lost victims of disasters [SMITHSONIAN, March 1990], and help homeowners by sniffing out termites, carpenter ants and other wood-destroying insects. Dogs can also detect diseases in honeycombs and have been tested for detecting certain diseases in humans: some are uncanny in their ability to alert to the onset of an epileptic seizure.
Andrew K. Solarz
Annapolis, Maryland

Marble

Dear Sir: How could you ignore the Cockeysville marble which, with Setters quartzite, Baltimore gneiss and Wissahickon schist, makes up most of the Maryland piedmont? Quarries in Baltimore County, near Texas and Cockeysville, supplied marble for many earlier government buildings, including the Washington Monument, the Capitol and the Supreme Court—not to mention Baltimore's famous white marble steps!

The quarries have been abandoned and flooded for many years, but I remember them well as swimming holes, from my first days in Baltimore, in 1934. Their depth gave them unique clarity, and an eerie greenness.
Winslow H. Hartford
Charlotte, North Carolina

Dear Sir: About two miles north of St. Marys, Missouri, at the intersection of county road "J" and Highway 61 near an abandoned railhead is a random pile of a couple of dozen marble cubes, each approximately five feet square. The Ozora Marble Works had transported them there, five miles from its quarry. It



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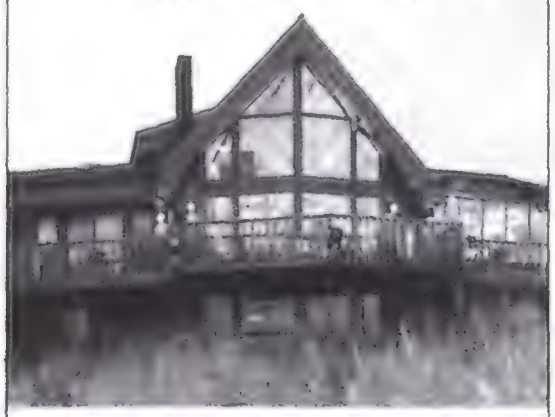

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had a thriving business, about 75 years ago, shipping marble cubes and blocks throughout the country, then it went bankrupt. The quarry-to-railhead road was mostly large rocks and mudholes; as a very young child I saw a loaded Packard flatbed truck sunk to its axles.

The quality of the marble was reputedly second-best in the world. On a recent nostalgic drive through the area, I envisioned the talented hands of sculptors releasing the faces of great men and women from those cubes.

Howard J. Schulte
Sun City, Arizona

Dear Sir: It may be that the single stone cut in Colorado for the Tomb of the Unknowns was the largest block of *marble* ever quarried, but a recent Associated Press report in the *Boston Globe* quotes Egyptologists as saying the largest surviving stone ever worked was probably the granite piece fashioned into a 1,000-ton statue of Ramses II, for his mortuary temple at Thebes. Before being worked it would, of course, have weighed considerably more. In view of the primitive equipment available to the Egyptians, quarrying and transporting it was a stupendous accomplishment.

Ralph Dopmeyer
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Chile peppers

Dear Sir: Another part of the world that uses chiles as an everyday condiment is the Middle East. In Israel four main hot sauces are offered with the various ethnic foods. They are: *schoog*—red or green chiles ground with garlic and other spices; *arisa*; and the Yemenite *chilbeh*—a mixture of ground fenugreek seeds, black pepper and chile peppers.

The national fast food, falafel, can be eaten either with or without a hot sauce known simply as *charif*. If you get caught with smoke coming out of your ears, don't drink water, it spreads the fire. Eat some bread.

Emily B. Kawesch
Brookline, Massachusetts

Dear Sir: You nominated the habañera as the world's hottest pepper. Obviously, the author did not know of the datil. This little incendiary grows only in a very small area around St. Augustine, Florida, having been brought here in the 1700s by indentured workers from the island of Menorca.

This pepper's vitality is measured on Geiger counters. It is not dried or roasted, as are the milder cousins in the Southwest, but preserved in vinegar immediately after picking. This is not done for taste as much as for safety. The liquid serves the same purpose as does the water surrounding the reactor core of an atomic furnace—it prevents a complete meltdown.

Those who seek the ultimate in oral incineration should become acquainted with our datil: the Menorcans' revenge.

Robert W. Neelands
St. Augustine

Dear Sir: The bowl shown in your photograph on page 48 is actually a *molcajete*, rather than a *metate*, and the hand stone used as its grinder is a *tejolote*, not a *mano*. The *metate* is a flat, sloping, three-legged rectangle made of basalt [below]. As described in Diana Kennedy's *The Cuisines of Mexico*, it is used to grind dry ingredients such as corn (for tortillas), chiles and cacao. Its tool, the *mano*, is a long piece of basalt resembling a rolling pin. The *molcajete* and *tejolote*, also of basalt and similar to a mortar and pestle, are used for making textured sauces that a blender would liquify.

Bertha Y. Ivaldi
Brownsville, Texas

Mrs. Ivaldi is correct, but the Cervantes tell us that in their region of Mexico both kinds of grinders were called metates. Ed.

A *molcajete* with its *tejolote* is at the top; below them are a *metate* and *mano*.

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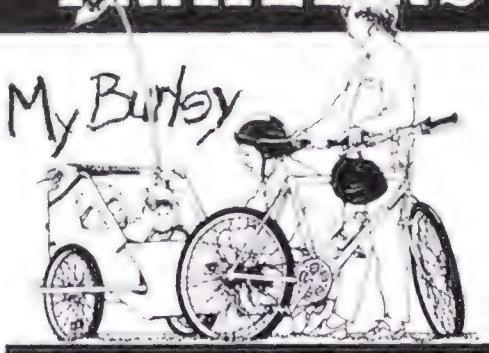

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Dear Sir: Author Jim Robbins quotes Susan Zamora as saying, "If I don't eat chiles on a regular basis, I get weird." I also have experienced this vague feeling. While unaware of any scientific data to substantiate my hypothesis, capsaicin, properly identified as an alkaloid, may have physiologically addictive properties. After all, other botanical alkaloids include nicotine, caffeine and morphine.
Glen C. Weiser
Meridian, Idaho

Highlights continued

Dear Sir: During the North African campaign General Sir Bernard Montgomery climbed into the turret of a 12th Royal Tank Regiment's Churchill tank while inspecting troops. The peak of his Australian slouch hat caught on the turret hatch rim and fell to the ground, the tank moved forward and the hat was left behind. The problem of Monty's emerging hatless from the vehicle was solved by the tank's quick-thinking commander, Sgt. "Jock" Fraser, who gave the general his own black beret with its RTR badge. Thereafter Montgomery wore two badges side by side on a black beret: the Royal Tank Regiment's "tank" badge and the general staff's crossed batons in a wreath. This was his wartime mark of distinction.
Anthony C. Smith
Toronto

All gut, no glory

Dear Sir: My problem is the same as Donald Jackson's. The day I realized I was taller lying down than standing up, I decided I would once again be svelte. How to begin? Enroll in a weight-loss clinic? No, I didn't need a weight-gain clinic to get into this shape. So without outside help, the fat will go.

I decided to face the problem sensibly. Why did I gain? I ate too much. How would I lose? I'd eat too little. It took me 60 years to get into this shape, a four-pound gain each year since birth. By eating less, consisting of a menu of nothing I really enjoy, I will be able to reverse the trend and reduce at the same average. By the time I am 80 I'll be down to a healthy, svelte weight.

The diet seems to be working. I'm always hungry and miserable, but after three months I have reached my loss goal of one pound.
Samuel A. Thatcher
Patchogue, New York

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Around the Mall and beyond

We enter the National Museum of American History from the Mall, turn right at the Foucault pendulum and soon see elegant, gilt letters splashed on the wall to our right, spelling out "First Ladies" in a flowing script. Newcomers to the Smithsonian will wander in without a thought and, as in so many other exhibits in this wonderful museum, be quickly cajoled into learning bits of American lore they've never before encountered.

But we old hands pause to give thanks that the First Ladies are back on display after being "indisposed" for five years. This exhibit is totally new. We won't see that stately parade of mannequins depicting White House hostesses, before which we used to wear out carpets faster than at any other place in the Smithsonian. "First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image" has—as its full title suggests—many dimensions, themes within themes, depths within depths.

Two Smithsonian volunteers, Rose Hoes and Cassie James, started the original First Ladies exhibit by asking Helen Taft to contribute the gown she'd worn to the Inaugural Ball honoring her and President Taft in 1909. Other First Ladies followed suit, so to speak, and clothing from the earlier women made for a complete survey of First Lady gowns, displayed in period room settings.

Now we find only seven mannequins —in the Ceremonial Court, a room adjacent to the new exhibit. They present formal gowns worn by First Ladies from Jackie Kennedy through Barbara Bush, which I will not try to describe (and a good thing, too). On 19 dress forms in the new exhibit, we see a variety of other outfits, such as one of Jackie Kennedy's mini suits, Nancy Reagan's red suit, and a camouflage jacket that Barbara Bush put on to visit troops during Operation Desert Storm. We also face a fascinating and disconcerting display of how the beautiful fabrics of the older gowns that used to appear here are deteriorating, and how conservators are trying to save them—a story in itself.

The main thrust of the new show is the unique role of the First Lady and the way all those Presidential wives and hostesses have been interpreting and coping with it for 203 years. A spectacular collection of objects and visual materials opens the door to memories and anecdotes. This month of March is Women's History Month, so it's especially appropriate that the opening of "First Ladies" is on the 29th.

After entering the exhibit, it doesn't take long to realize that an "ideal" First Lady has an impossible job, akin to being an eight-ball juggler on a tightrope. She supports the President, cam-

Do you ever get motion sickness? You know that queasy, nauseous, dizzy feeling?

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paigns for him, acts as sounding board for his decisions and sometimes touches the spurs to him, yet never seems to. If she's his wife—many First Ladies were other members of his family—she must be a shining exemplar of domesticity, loyal and modest, yet able to make an eye-drawing entrance at one state dinner after another, dressed to the nines, with a different hairdo each time.

She must be able to put the most oafish freshman Congressman at ease with a warm glance, then, if diplomatic protocol requires it, peel a grape for an emir. Our ideal First Lady manages all this without the slightest intake of breath or bead of moisture on the brow, all the while carefully guarding the White House purse strings.

Martha Washington and Abigail Adams started it all. We are reminded that they had to invent their role in the new republic: dignified yet not regal. Martha had always looked after George's domestic comfort, even at Valley Forge, and now kept on doing so.

But in the temporary capitals of New York and Philadelphia, Martha missed the easy social life of the Virginia aristocracy. "I am more like a state prisoner than anything else," she confided. As a hostess, she tried to talk with strangers and ease tensions at dinner parties when George was grumpy after a row with Congress. She held Friday "drawing rooms"—receptions for visitors—and started the tradition of an open house on New Year's Day, which lasted until Lou Hoover, not wanting to be indicted for being a spendthrift during the Depression, ended it in 1930.

We find Martha's portrait—based on an early work—along with Gilbert Stuart's familiar one of George, hanging above smaller portraits of King George III and Queen Charlotte. The juxtaposition points up the conflicting notions in 1789 about what was to be the style of the Presidency: Was our George to comport himself like a king? Just in case, people often called Martha "Lady Washington."

At receptions, protocol-conscious Washington insisted that Abigail Adams, wife of the Vice President, sit beside Martha. Later, as First Lady herself, this New England intellectual expanded the new role. She supported John Adams openly, even sallying into political waters, which by 1797 had grown pretty rough. "I expect to be vilified and abused," she lamented to a friend as she faced her future. And indeed it wasn't long before Adams' foes were calling her "Mrs. President." In time Abigail revealed that she had become "sick, sick, sick of public life."

One of her troubles was having to move to the new city of Washington, a collection of a few buildings separated by terrible roads. The White House was unfinished; a 1960s painting shows Abigail hanging clothes to dry in the East Room. As for Georgetown, she found it "the very dirtyest Hole I ever saw. . . ."

As we get further into the exhibit, we find it breaks down into themes. From the pair that invented the role, we move to a section devoted to First Ladies noted as social partners and hostesses. Dolley Madison presided over Jefferson's dinner parties (he was a widower) before "the great little Madison," as she called him, took office. One reason he got there, we find, was because Dolley would invite his Congressional foes to her own dinners and win them

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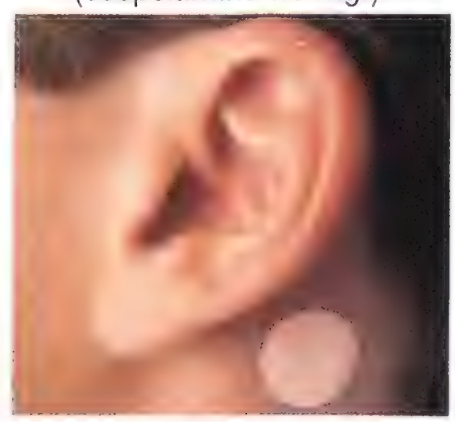

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Transderm Scōp is a prescription product for adults only that has been clinically tested, proving it safe and effective. Even so, it can have some side effects. Dryness of the mouth occurs in two-thirds of users. As with many medications, drowsiness may occur (affecting less than one in six) and users are warned against driving or operating dangerous machinery. Use with special care in the elderly and avoid drinking alcohol while using the product. See adjoining page for additional information on possible adverse reactions or side effects.

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WARNINGS
Transderm Scōp should not be used in children and should be used with special caution in the elderly. See **PRECAUTIONS.**

Since drowsiness, disorientation, and confusion may occur with the use of scopolamine, patients should be warned of the possibility and cautioned against engaging in activities that require mental alertness, such as driving a motor vehicle or operating dangerous machinery.

Potentially alarming idiosyncratic reactions may occur with ordinary therapeutic doses of scopolamine.

PRECAUTIONS
General. Scopolamine should be used with caution in patients with pyloric obstruction, or urinary bladder neck obstruction.

Caution should be exercised when administering an antiemetic or anti-muscarinic drug to patients suspected of having intestinal obstruction.

Transderm Scōp should be used with special caution in the elderly or in individuals with impaired metabolic, liver or kidney functions, because of the increased likelihood of CNS effects.

Information for Patients. Since scopolamine can cause temporary dilation of the pupils and blurred vision if it comes in contact with the eyes, patients should be strongly advised to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water immediately after handling the patch.

Patients should be advised to remove the patch immediately and contact a physician in the unlikely event that they experience symptoms of acute narrow-angle glaucoma (pain in and reddening of the eyes accompanied by dilated pupils).

Patients should be warned against driving a motor vehicle or operating dangerous machinery. A patient brochure is available.

Drug Interactions. Scopolamine should be used with care in patients taking drugs, including alcohol, capable of causing CNS effects. Special attention should be given to drugs having anticholinergic properties, e.g., belladonna alkaloids, antihistamines (including meclizine), and antidepressants.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, Impairment of Fertility. No long-term studies in animals have been performed to evaluate carcinogenic potential. Fertility studies were performed in female rats and revealed no evidence of impaired fertility or harm to the fetus due to scopolamine hydrobromide administered by daily subcutaneous injection. In the highest dose group (plasma level approximately 500 times the level achieved in humans using a transdermal system), reduced maternal body weights were observed.

Pregnancy Category C. Teratogenic studies were performed in pregnant rats and rabbits with scopolamine hydrobromide administered by daily intravenous injection. No adverse effects were recorded in the rats. In the rabbits, the highest dose (plasma level approximately 100 times the level achieved in humans using a transdermal system) of drug administered had a marginal embryotoxic effect. Transderm Scōp should be used during pregnancy only if the anticipated benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

Nursing Mothers. It is not known whether scopolamine is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised when Transderm Scōp is administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use. Children are particularly susceptible to the side effects of belladonna alkaloids. Transderm Scōp should not be used in children because it is not known whether this system will release an amount of scopolamine that could produce serious adverse effects in children.

ADVERSE REACTIONS
The most frequent adverse reaction to Transderm Scōp is dryness of the mouth. This occurs in about two thirds of the people. A less frequent adverse reaction is drowsiness, which occurs in less than one sixth of the people. Transient impairment of eye accommodation, including blurred vision and dilation of the pupils, is also observed.

The following adverse reactions have also been reported on infrequent occasions during the use of Transderm Scōp: disorientation, memory disturbances, dizziness, restlessness, hallucinations, confusion, difficulty urinating, rashes and erythema, acute narrow-angle glaucoma, and dry itchy, or red eyes.

Drug Withdrawal: Symptoms including dizziness, nausea, vomiting, headache and disturbances of equilibrium have been reported in a few patients following discontinuation of the use of the Transderm Scōp system. These symptoms have occurred most often in patients who have used the systems for more than three days. Rev 4/26/91

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over. She eventually became a Washington legend.

Louisa Catherine, wife of John Quincy Adams, was born and raised in Europe, hence looked upon askance by the Adams family—reverse snobbery to a painful degree. She was a talented musician, but had to give up playing the harp, which we see here, at social affairs: the President thought it unseemly. With an eye to his career when he was Secretary of State, she put on a lavish ball for Andrew Jackson when this war hero and new Senator swept into Washington on a wave of popularity. This, and her endless calls on other politicians' wives, helped boost her often ill-tempered husband into the White House. Still, like her mother-in-law, Abigail, she became fed up with it all, stating that the social demands of the job often "made me sick . . . and sometimes I think . . . will make me crazy."

Through prints and photographs, scraps of writing, a few items of china, we meet tense, troubled Mary Lincoln and affable, contented Julia Grant, two of our most noted official hostesses. They were very competitive with and jealous of each other, but both believed that extravagant entertaining was good for the prestige of the Presidency. A Lincoln party in 1861 featured confectionary sculptures—a steamer named "Union" and a model of Fort Sumter. Later in the Administration, Mary was castigated for her expensive tastes.

Julia Grant was equally extravagant, yet got away with it. She started buying items for the White House in 1869, as soon as she moved in, and her receptions reflected the excesses of the North's nouveaux riches of post-Civil War days. One Grant dinner had 29 courses.

Though Mary Lincoln had filled the cupboards with state china only a few years before—raising eyebrows by doing so—Julia bought two more lots of it, one order for 587 pieces. I suppose she needed them for 29 courses. Nary an eyebrow twitched. While as a Southerner Mary was often accused of being a traitor and a spy during the war, Julia basked in the public's relief that the fighting was over and in the popularity of her husband as a victorious war hero.

Mamie Eisenhower garnered a wealth of practice in hostessing during her husband's Army days and, wrote a White House head usher, "could give orders . . . as if it were she who had been a five-star general."

National Museum of American Art

To keep the peace with dour John Quincy Adams, First Lady Louisa finally quit playing her harp at social occasions.

Yet Mamie was a warm person, given to the personal touch in greeting guests, in shaking hands with thousands of visitors, in answering correspondence. People loved her and showed it at the polls.

We move on to First Ladies noted as political partners: feisty Sarah Polk, who edited her husband's speeches; Helen Taft, who had more political ambition than her husband; and Edith Wilson, who almost ran the government after Woodrow was incapacitated by a stroke.

Florence Harding helped her husband run his Ohio newspaper and grimly tugged him into the White House. "Well, Warren," she then said, "I have got you the Presidency; what are you going to do with it?" Among the Harding Administration inner circle, Florence came to be known as the "Duchess" because of her insistence that she knew what was best for the President. Some even speculated that she decided when his term would end. After two years in office, he died suddenly under suspicious circumstances, and Florence refused to permit an autopsy.

Rosalynn Carter is remembered for attending Cabinet meetings, and Eleanor Roosevelt was so politically active that she opened new vistas of what being First Lady was all about.

So the themes of the exhibit proceed: First Ladies involved in social causes (Nancy Reagan versus drugs, Betty Ford pro the ERA, Eleanor Roosevelt in support of civil rights), those who promoted the arts and historic preserva-

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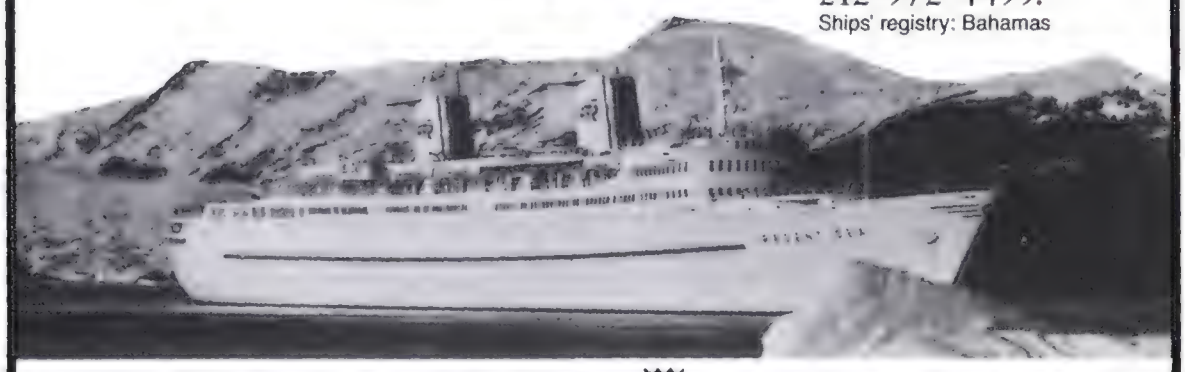

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tion (Jackie Kennedy is one) and those who campaigned for their husbands, like Mmes. Harding and Taft.

This is a complex and thoughtful exhibit, put together by curator Edith Mayo and her associates, with many small sidelights beckoning us from the main thrust: First Ladies in mourning, for example, appended with the unforgettable photograph of Jackie Kennedy at JFK's funeral, with "John-John" saluting his father. One visit will not be enough here, for there are 800 items to look at, and the stories told by the placards must be read.

Our own Barbara Bush is treated in the social causes section. Her candid espousal of various positions that her husband found to be *liberal* caused many delighted chuckles early in the Bush Administration. The exhibit reminds us that after she came out in favor of banning assault weapons, Barbara announced that she'd voice no more opinions on such issues. Mum would be the word.

Yet we also see here photographs of her 1990 commencement speech at Wellesley College, when some students protested that they should be listening to a self-made woman, not one who had "simply married a President." Barbara won them over in typical fashion by pointing out that "somewhere out in this audience may even be someone who will one day follow in my footsteps, and preside over the White House as the President's spouse. I wish him well!"

Edwards Park

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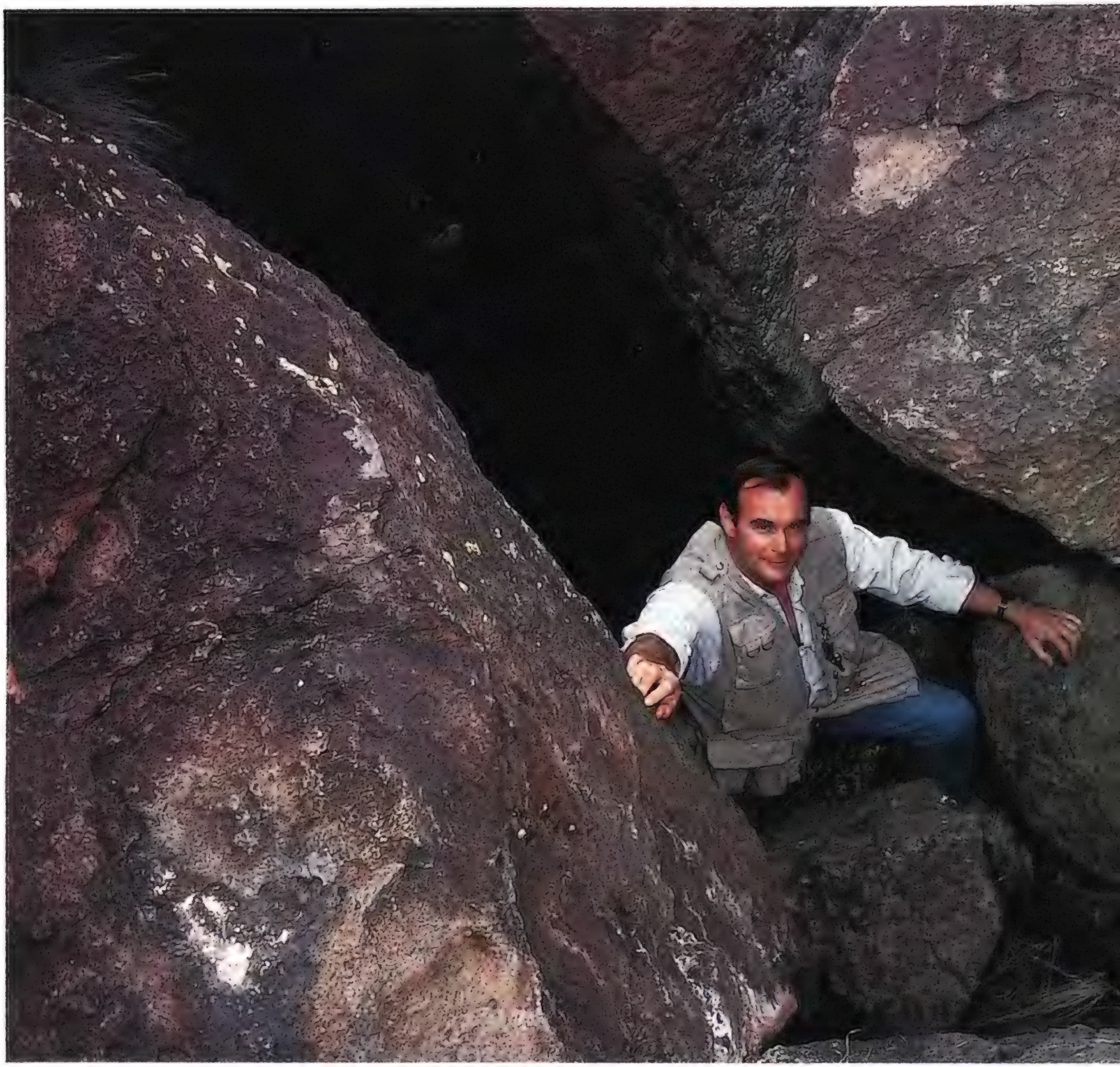
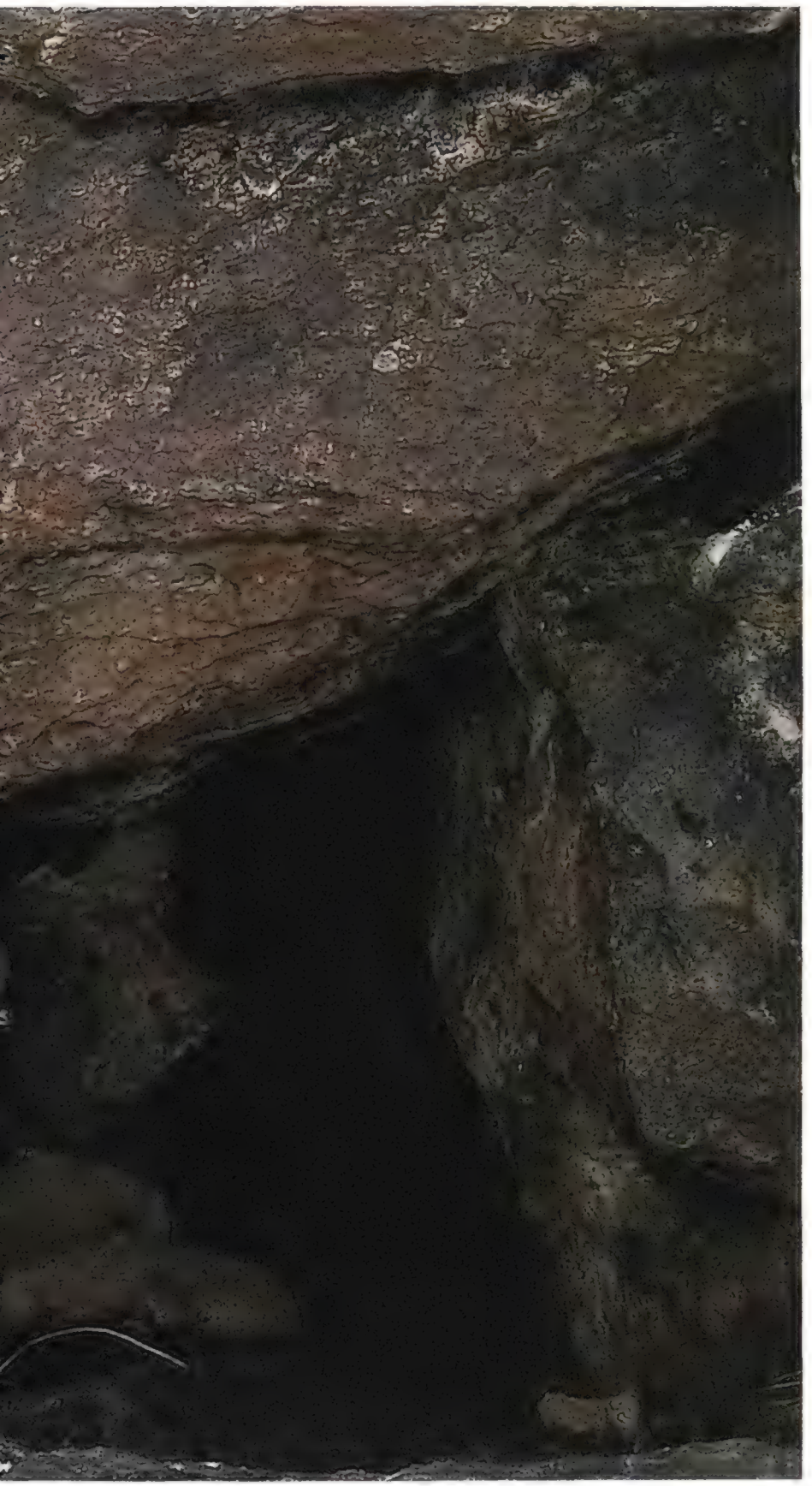
By David Roberts

Together, scientists and Indians explore the conundrums of Casa Malpais



Archaeologist John Hohmann clambers up a trail to Casa Malpais, where he and associates found caverns.

Controversial discoveries at this ancient site in Arizona promise to revolutionize our ideas about the prehistory of the Southwest



They were used for burials by a culture that flourished in New Mexico and Arizona until the 15th century.

"I thought it would be a quick in-and-out job," John Hohmann told me as we stood on the rim of a basalt cliff and looked at the ancient ruins below. In the summer of 1990, the 37-year-old archaeologist had come to east-central Arizona to investigate this prehistoric village. Known to white settlers for more than a century as Casa Malpais (Spanish for "House of the Badlands"), it had been surveyed by previous archaeologists but never excavated.

Casa Malpais sits on a series of basalt terraces backed by a south-facing cliff, above the Little Colorado River. To Hohmann's eye, the rubble-strewn ruin was recognizable as a late Mogollon pueblo, dating from around the 13th century. A rectangular great kiva, one of the largest in Arizona, was its dominant feature. Camouflaged by thickets of saltbush, the dim outlines of the pueblo room-block protruded; Hohmann estimated that there were more than 40 individual rooms in its rectangular grid.

A descent for a closer look into the past

One unusual geological feature piqued Hohmann's curiosity. The basalt flow that formed the terraces on which the Mogollon village rests had fractured eons ago, opening deep fissures in the bedrock. As he walked across the surface, Hohmann peered into the subterranean darkness through small openings that capped those fissures. The earlier archaeologists knew about the caves but neglected to explore them. Hohmann decided to take a closer look.

With his assistants, Christopher Adams and Diane White, Hohmann rigged a series of rappels. Leery of rattlesnake dens, he roped down into the darkness, carrying with him not only a flashlight but a .22 revolver. As soon as he had entered the first cavern, Hohmann realized he had stumbled upon an astounding phenomenon. The natural fissures—some as large as 50 feet high and 100 feet long—were divided by carefully built stone walls sealing off smaller chambers. And those chambers had evidently been used for human burials. Although many of the crypts had been severely looted, Hohmann, Adams and White were eventually able to estimate that 200 to 300 bodies had been interred in the eerie grottoes.

What else could one call those natural caverns fashioned into formal burial crypts but catacombs? Nothing of the kind had ever been found in the prehistoric Southwest. Indeed, as far as Hohmann and Adams knew, no Indian catacombs had ever before been identified in the United States.

Despite their excitement, the three young scientists sat cautiously on their knowledge for eight months. In April 1991, at the annual meeting of the 2,000-member Society of American Archaeology in New

Photographs by Terrence Moore

Orleans, Hohmann and Adams made a poster presentation of their Casa Malpais work. An impromptu news conference ensued.

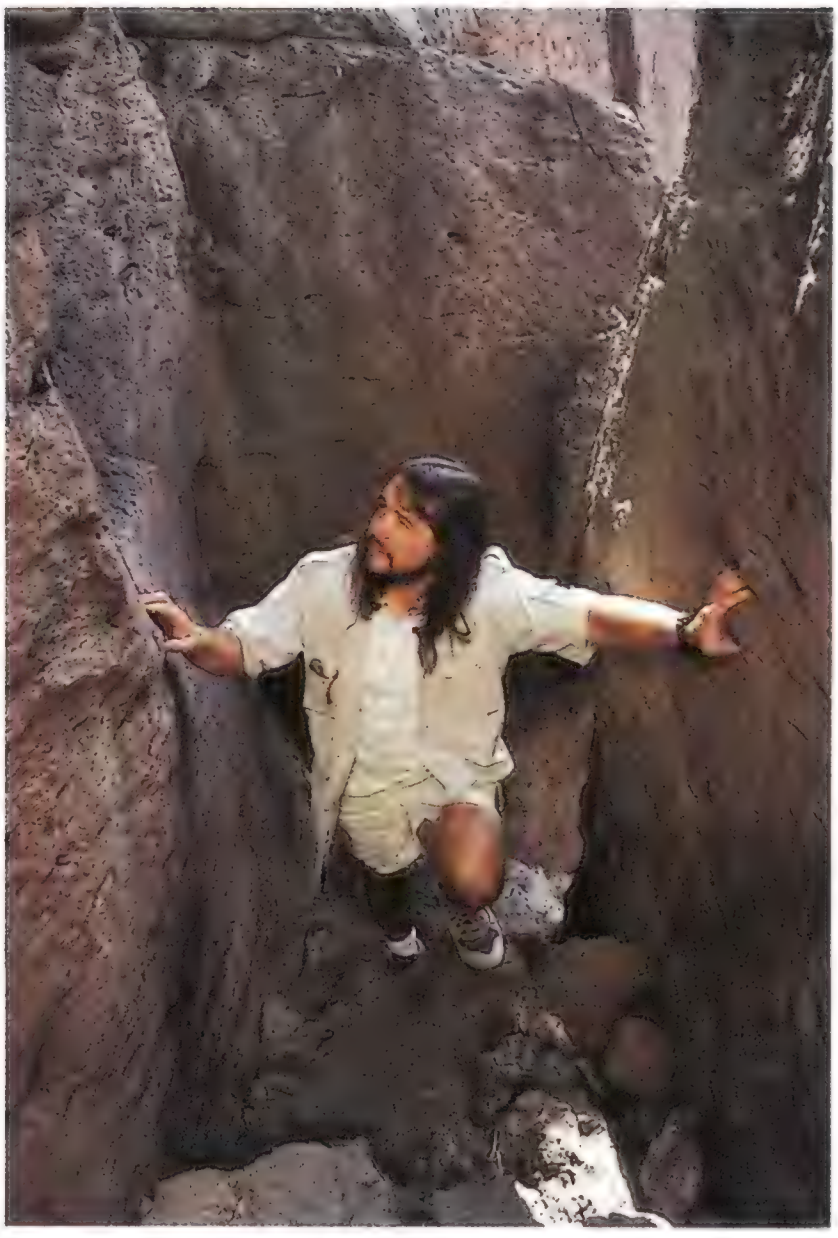
"I thought it might make page 15 of the New Orleans newspaper," recalls Hohmann with bemusement. Adams adds, "The day after the meeting, we were getting on the plane. I picked up the *New York Times*, and there it was. We were sitting on the plane with 30 of our colleagues, who are going, 'What is this crap? What are you guys talking about?' "

The storm of publicity that crossed the country soon turned into a storm of controversy. Hohmann and Adams had unwittingly laid themselves open to criticism on at least three separate grounds. Some of their fellow archaeologists took exception and said the crypts really didn't qualify technically as "catacombs"—"the *C* word," as Hohmann now ruefully calls it. Certain scientists sneered at the purported uniqueness of Casa Malpais. Paul Fish, curator of archaeology at the Arizona State Museum, for example, was quoted by a Tucson newspaper as saying, "I don't want to be too negative in print or to suggest that this is some kind of scam, but the use of fissures is something that these people [prehistoric inhabitants of the Southwest] did whenever the opportunity was presented to them."

The flamboyance of Hohmann's public performance also raised professional hackles. The widely distributed wire-service story from New Orleans opened with a vignette in which the archaeologists "crept over rocky precipices, past dozing rattlesnakes and through sacred rooms deep in the wilds of Arizona"; the story quoted Hohmann as saying that he "felt a bit like Indiana Jones." Back in Arizona, the two men held another news conference, at which Hohmann appeared as he usually dresses for the field—wearing a fedora and a safari shirt, toting a hefty sheath knife and his holstered .22. Soon the newspapers had nicknamed him "Arizona John."

The most serious backlash, however, sprang out of the ongoing debate over archaeological appropriation of native-American burial sites. No issue in American science is more volatile at the moment than the clash between Indians, on the one hand, and museums and scholars, on the other, over the tens of thousands of prehistoric graves that have been dug up during the past century and a half. Hohmann and Adams had not even hinted at excavating the Casa Malpais catacombs. But they had gone public without first consulting Arizona's tribal groups, and in the charged atmosphere of the day, merely to announce their discovery was to wade into the ideological crossfire.

David Roberts writes from his home in Cambridge, Massachusetts, but he likes to get out of doors (especially in the Southwest) as often as possible.



Hohmann's assistant Christopher Adams uses holds carved by ancient people as he climbs pueblo stairway.

Stone walls of great kiva are roughly 50 feet square. Kiva was used for religious and ceremonial purposes.

The controversy had yet another dimension. Far from lying "deep in the wilds of Arizona," Casa Malpais stands within the city limits of Springerville (though on state land), only two miles from the town's main drag. Generations of Springerville residents played in the Mogollon ruins as kids; boys hunted rabbits with their BB guns along its terraces, while girls picnicked inside the great kiva. The main business of Springerville (pop. 2,000) is lumbering, and in July 1990 the mill at Stone Forest Industries, the town's chief employer, shut down. Economically depressed, with a high unemployment rate, the town cast about for new sources of revenue.

Already on the table was a proposal to turn Casa Malpais into a recreational park to attract tourists. To comply with the National Historic Preservation Act, the site had to be thoroughly assessed for its archaeological significance before any development could take place. Thus the town of Springerville hired Hohmann and Adams, who work for the Phoenix branch of Louis Berger & Associates, a consulting firm that specializes in contract archaeology.

Contract archaeology is an industry that has sprung up in direct response to the new sensitivity to ancient remains. Less than a generation ago (as many Springerville residents like to point out) the town might have developed the ruins any way it pleased; archaeologists might have dug in the catacombs without worrying whose sensibilities they offended. Early in 1991, however, a stringent Arizona state law went into effect. It requires that whenever scientists come upon the remains of human burials on state land, all 20 Indian tribes in Arizona must be given a chance to claim cultural affinity with those remains. If a tribe does claim affinity, it must be consulted as to the disposition of the remains before any work can begin.

Leigh Jenkins, Hopi cultural preservation officer, welcomes research aboveground but not in catacombs.

Two peoples, the Hopi and the Zuni, at once claimed cultural affinity with Casa Malpais. These pueblo-dwelling tribes had occupied their present villages—the Hopi atop three mesas in northeastern Arizona, the Zuni along a river in western New Mexico—long before the Spanish came to the Southwest in the 16th century. With the claims of affinity, the already explosive situation grew even touchier. The real possibility loomed that the people of Springerville might find their commercial aspirations at sharp odds with the Hopi and the Zuni, as the hapless archaeologists, caught in the middle, twiddled their thumbs while they wondered whether they would ever be able to pursue what might turn out to be one of the great discoveries of their generation in the Southwest.

As soon as the newspapers blazoned the catacombs discovery, scores of visitors from as far away as Switzerland and Australia began to show up daily in Springerville. To accommodate their curiosity, Hohmann and Adams trained local volunteers to lead tours of the site. During the first four months of the program, more than 12,000 people walked though the great kiva and gazed at the pueblo room-block.

But the catacombs were strictly off-limits. And since it was the catacombs that had brought them to Casa Malpais in the first place, some visitors were miffed. As the disgruntled bartender in one of the local watering holes complained to me one night, "Yeah, I took the tour. I was disappointed. I wanted to see the graves, the burial chambers."

Ensuring adequate security for Casa Malpais had already become a major headache. Camped in a trailer atop the plateau that overlooks the site, a guard keeps watch 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There is also an aerial surveillance program. Fences surround the site, with signs warning visitors to approach only on guided tours.

The Mogollon, as scholars designate the people who built Casa Malpais and hundreds of other settlements in southeastern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico, flourished from at least A.D. 200 to the end of the 14th century. What happened to them after the latter date remains a mystery. No archaeologist has yet discovered a definite physical link between the Mogollon and any living people; by far the best evidence of such an ancestral link comes from the folklore and oral traditions of the Hopi and the Zuni.

Why not ask someone who knows?

Leigh Jenkins, cultural preservation officer for the Hopi tribe, recalls a Four Corners symposium organized by the federal Bureau of Land Management, to which he was invited, he says, as a kind of afterthought. "What happened to the Anasazi?—that was the big question," says Jenkins. The Anasazi, a culture that flourished in the Four Corners region, occupied the sites now known as Chaco Canyon, Mesa Verde and Canyon de Chelly. "The experts had all these professional answers. They talked about drought, warfare, migration. Finally I said, 'They didn't go anywhere. They're still around. I can tell you exactly where.' "

Just as the Hopi preserve age-old oral traditions linking themselves with the Anasazi to the north and east, so Hopi folklore speaks of Mogollon haunts to the south. "At least seven of our clans have an interest in that site," says Jenkins of Casa Malpais, "based on petroglyphs and oral traditions."

Hohmann and I had come to the Hopi Second Mesa to talk to Jenkins about the catacombs. Elsewhere in Arizona, Indian objections have shut down digs altogether. Determined to forestall such a fate, Hohmann, Adams and White had resolved to consult the Indians at every step of their work. They would excavate no room without asking Hopi and Zuni permission; they would ask Hopi and Zuni elders to visit the site and offer interpretive hints; and they offered to train Indians as apprentices in archaeology.

The tribes were clearly upset at the attention the news media were paying to the catacombs. As Jenkins told us, "You need to look at the way native people feel about burials. I don't think any Hopi would ever go down there [into the catacombs] without special spiritual preparation. Casa Malpais is not just a site of rocks and walls. Even the water is alive and remembers the history of the region."

Zuni spokesmen, too, told Hohmann that the less said about the catacombs the better. The underground chambers must remain closed to tourists, journalists

and scientists alike. Gratified to find themselves consulted, the Hopi and Zuni welcomed continuing, responsible research aboveground at Casa Malpais.

And the closer Hohmann and Adams looked at the site, the more extraordinary were their findings. As Adams restored the great kiva, a chamber used for religious and ceremonial purposes, its inherent beauty and sophisticated engineering emerged. The pueblo room-block turned out not to have some 40 rooms, as Hohmann had initially estimated, but 60 to 80. An unusual network of tunnels and apertures formed a ventilation system. Excavating only rooms that had already been pothunted, the archaeologists found such artifacts as a stone bowl with froglike figures (right, center), a superb polychrome ceramic pipe, a small bone-and-reed whistle or flute, coiled fiber baskets, a ceramic pot with handles, and a macaw feather (suggesting trade with Mexico).

From excavated roof beams, Hohmann and Adams got consistent tree-ring dates of between A.D. 1250 and 1300. Adams and White, both experts in ceramics, were dazzled by the variety of potsherd styles, some of which argued for occupation as late as 1300. One kind of sherd, on which green designs were painted over a white slip, was particularly intriguing (above). It is informally called "proto-Zuni glazeware" for its resemblance to Zuni pottery made in historic times, and its occurrence at Casa Malpais reinforces arguments, based on oral traditions, for an ancestral connection between the Zuni and the Mogollon.

One small but exquisite object baffled Hohmann, Adams and White. Made of green soapstone, it looks exactly like a golf tee (below). When some Zuni men were asked to look at it, they at once offered a pair of explanations. The "tee" might be a pedestal on which to place a sacred object, they said, or it could be a tool carried in a medicine bag: a medicine man would wet the tip and use it to dab up a bit of pollen and place it on the body of a sick person.

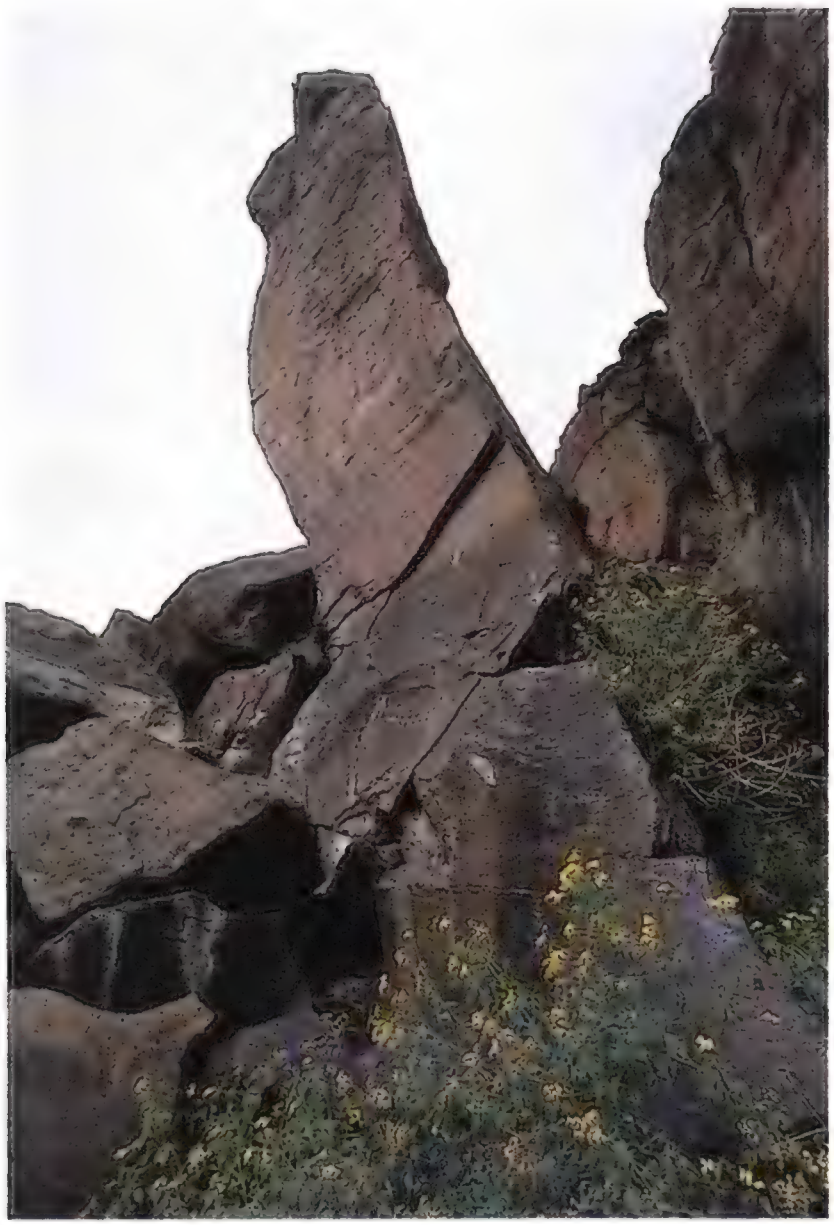
Sometimes the experts disagree

Here was tangible fruit from the collaboration between Indian informants and Western-trained archaeologists. Yet sometimes the aid of the Hopi and Zuni only added to the mystery. Casa Malpais is rich in petroglyphs: graceful italic V shapes suggesting bighorn sheep, long extinct in the area; what may be water symbols and lightning sticks; elklike beasts and humanoid figures; a strange "centipede" with giant pincers; a swastika very like a Hopi direction symbol. Archaeologists have always been reluctant, however, to interpret rock art. Not so the Hopi and Zuni whom Adams and Hohmann led to the petroglyphs. The fascinating thing about their interpretations was that the

Rare polychrome sherds suggest a link between the Mogollon residents of Casa Malpais and modern Zuni.

Frog carved on the side of a stone bowl was most likely a Mogollon deity associated with water and rain.

Tee-like object might have been a pedestal of some sort or a medicine man's tool for dabbing sacred pollen.



Dramatic pinnacle may have been used to tether sacred eagles, as stone for such purposes was found on top.

Hopi explanation for a given design was often quite different from the Zuni version.

Away from the central pueblo and great kiva, Hohmann, Adams and White were coming across still more surprising things. A large enclosure on a lower terrace, four of whose five openings match the cardinal directions, might have been a dance plaza. The whole of Casa Malpais is surrounded by a stone wall, which Hohmann thinks served ritual rather than defensive purposes (walled or not, the village appears to be vulnerable to attack from the plateau at its back). Several stone staircases—one of them a spiral winding through a narrow crevice up to the plateau—lead purposefully through the site. Some of the catacombs seem to have been capped by aboveground "sacred chambers," as Hohmann tentatively calls them. And a freestanding 30-foot pinnacle (above), with hand-and-toe holds carved into one of its vertical sides, may have been a platform for captive eagles; a stone that could have been used to tether the birds was found on top.

In April 1991, as he worked on a routine survey grid on one end of the room-block, Adams made a startling discovery. A flat rock that at first appeared to line the floor of one room in fact sealed a hole: a faint draft of air blew around its edges. Adams pulled the rock loose to see what was under it. The orifice was too small to stick his head through, but by lowering a video camera on a pole he could get an idea of the dimensions of the cavity. In a brilliant piece of sleuthing, Adams used the video footage to discover the actual Mogollon entrance—it lay yards away, at the bottom of what the scientists called Room 6.

An underground treasure of artifacts

In July, after obtaining Hopi and Zuni permission, Adams went down the "hatch." Though the space beneath was cramped and claustrophobic, full of fine dust laced with cactus spines carried inside by small rodents, Adams quickly realized that a sizable network of underground rooms lay between the apparent floor of the pueblo and the roof of the catacombs. Here was a discovery rivaling that of the catacombs themselves—for prehistoric underground structures have rarely ever been found in the Southwest. What the rooms had been used for remains a puzzle, but in the first weeks of exploring underground, Adams found provocative artifacts: a metate covered with turquoise dust so fresh it looked as if it had been ground yesterday, a gypsum mirror, a woven basket on a ledge, a stone axhead made of fine-grained basalt, many tiny bone beads, a black-and-white pottery jar decorated with butterflies.

One day in August, Edward B. (Ned) Danson showed up at Casa Malpais. Seventy-five years old, a patriarch of Southwestern archaeology (he happens also to be the father of Ted Danson of TV's *Cheers*), Danson had done the pioneering work at the site in the late 1940s, when he had quickly reconnoitered it as part of an ambitious survey of the region for Harvard's Peabody Museum. Danson had also been instrumental in making Casa Malpais a National Historic Landmark.

The visit was a nostalgic one for the retired scholar, and the chance of a lifetime for Hohmann and company, to whom Danson was a legend. Proudly, they took him on a tour of "his" site, Hohmann appending every other sentence with a deferential "sir." As he stood among the ruins, Danson smiled and addressed his guide: "You've got your life's work cut out for you here, don't you? This is too good a find not to do it thoroughly."

"We're going to do it right, sir," said Hohmann.

"Thank you."

Later, out of earshot of Hohmann, Danson told me, "It's an amazing site. I don't think we yet know how important it is."

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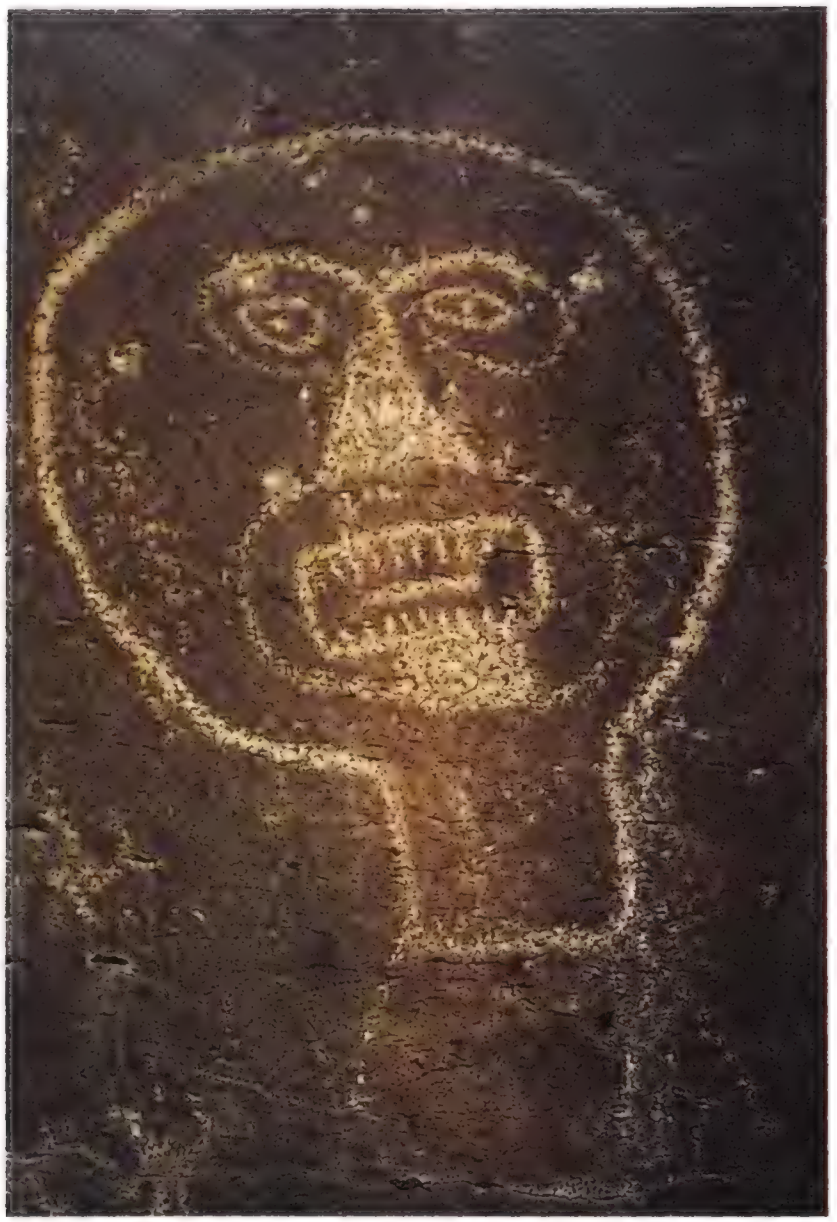


Large boulder displays petroglyph of a spirit figure known to Hopi as Masau, deity of present-day world.

If Hohmann and Adams had a special obligation to establish their credibility with the Hopi and Zuni, they faced an equally delicate challenge to win the trust of the citizens of Springerville—who were, ultimately, their bosses. Almost overnight, the discovery of the catacombs had seemed to explode in the town's face. A story in the *Arizona Daily Star*, headlined "'Catacombs' flap," quoted unnamed sources suggesting "that Hohmann exaggerated the significance of the ruins to lure tourists to Springerville." The mood in town grew sour. Some locals were inclined to agree with the *Star*'s debunking. "I'm not sure there are any graves up there," said Rich Rogers, a jeweler whose parents were Springerville pioneers. "I've been all through those caves as a kid, and I never saw any."

Like most small ranching towns in the West, Springerville tends to be mistrustful of outsiders. The locals did not immediately take to Arizona John and his sidekick with the hippie-length black hair. Gradually, however, the townspeople came to accept the besieged archaeologists, and then even to confide in them some of their own secret lore.

Adams found old-timers who were willing to show him pots they had legally dug on private land or to share their hints about other sites. A few revelations were mind-boggling: for example, Adams was shown undisturbed prehistoric relics the likes of which have never been seen elsewhere in the Southwest—but only on the condition that not even a description of them appear in print.

One day, as Adams was completing a Casa Malpais tour for the public, a visitor lingered. Jumpy and agitated, he told Adams he wanted to speak to him, but only if Adams would guarantee immunity. He would tell Adams only his first name.

Now a New Mexican, the visitor had grown up in Springerville. Walking across Casa Malpais through the underbrush one day in 1960, he had felt a strange hollow sensation underfoot. Taking a large rock, he smashed it through what turned out to be the artificial wooden roof of a large catacomb. Inside, the man found walled-off crypts containing some 70 adult skeletons, many bedecked with dazzling grave goods.

Working alone over two years, the man looted the grave goods and sold them to a trader from Santa Fe. The catacomb was so rich that the trader made monthly flights to Springerville, rendezvousing at night with the pothunter's pickup at the local airport. Unaware of archaeological niceties, the man burned ancient roof beams in campfires and demolished stone walls.

The trader put him in touch, the man said, with a Navajo living in Mexico who wanted to buy the skeletons. Most Navajo will have nothing to do with human graves; this shadowy person may have been a "skinwalker," a Navajo witch, for he told the pothunter that he wanted the bones to grind them into a powder that could be used to cause one's enemies to fall ill. In due time, the Springerville man removed all of the skeletons and sold them to the Navajo.

"A new door opening in anthropology"

Thirty years later, as he had taken Adams' tour of the site, the man had been overcome with remorse. In 1960, however, if you didn't own a large ranch you had a tough job simply feeding your family. It was the best excuse the man could give for his grave robbing. Adams was convinced of the veracity of this remarkable and appalling tale, for the man showed him photographs he had taken of himself on the site.

It is still not clear how the tension provoked by the discovery of the catacombs will ultimately be resolved. It could yield a lasting collaboration between native Americans and scientists. Says Leigh Jenkins: "There's a new door opening here in anthropology—a partnership in which living cultures like the Hopi provide a link to past cultures." But Owen Bobelu, a Zuni tribal councilman, says, "I'm a scrutinizing person. And archaeologists are one group of people who like to

keep their knowledge to themselves. I think John and Chris need to give us even more information about everything they find. Give us more. Give us depth."

At least one thing about the catacombs is clear—they promise to revolutionize our ideas concerning the prehistory of the Southwest. Previous researchers had never suspected a burial phenomenon remotely like that of the catacombs. What else about the Mogollon have we got dead wrong? What have we yet to learn?

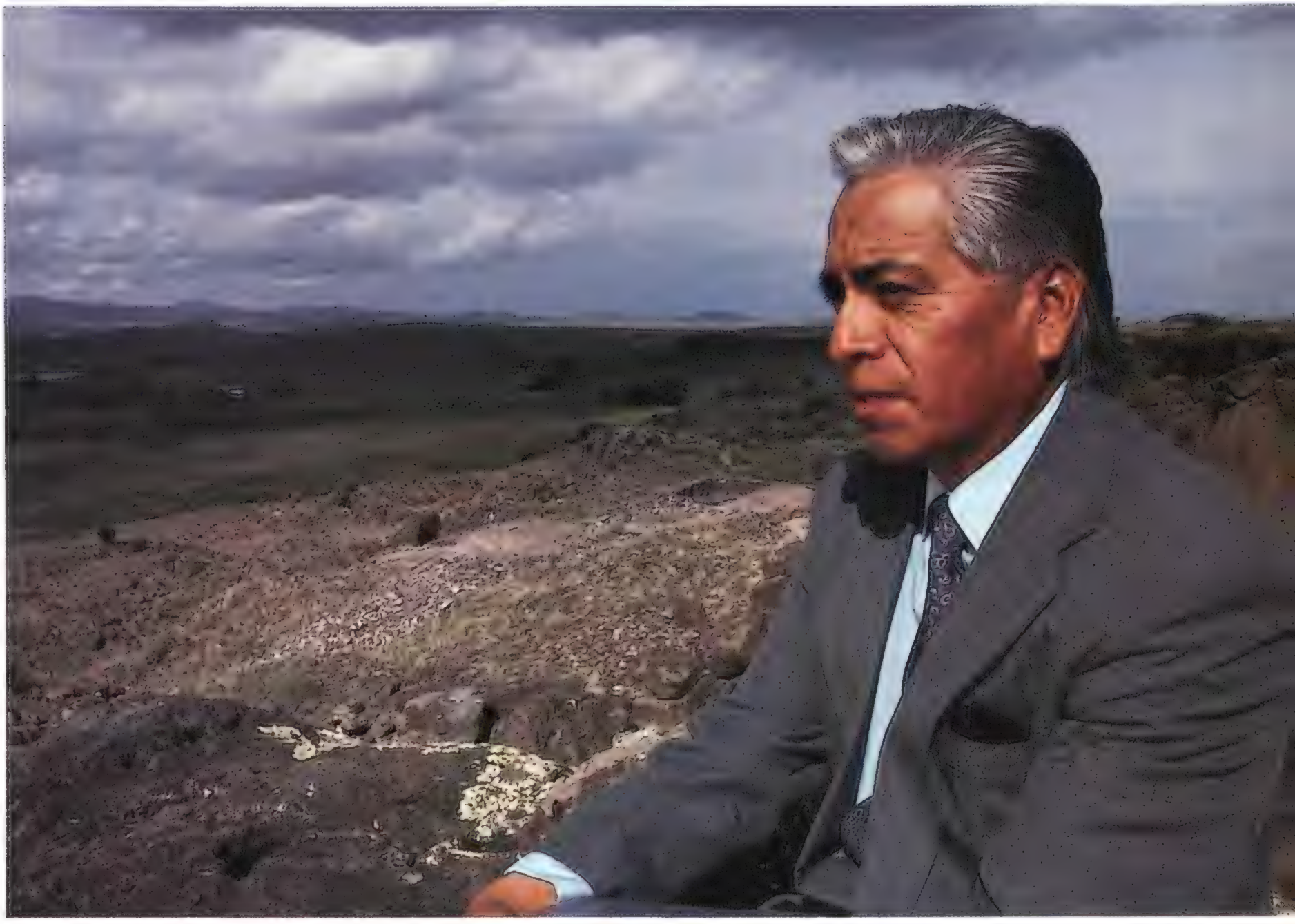
One of the most important questions is how widespread the catacombs are. Could Casa Malpais be unique? If not, as most experts think, then what burial sites lie out there awaiting rediscovery, threatened not only by science's probing light, but by the looter's reckless shovel?

Basalt flows laced with natural fissures and caverns such as those of Casa Malpais are common across eastern Arizona and western New Mexico. During my visit to Springerville last summer, I asked a number of locals about these formations. Following a tip, one afternoon I hiked across a plateau on national forest land about a dozen miles from Springerville, then came to an extensive broken cliff. The basalt terraces below were wildly honeycombed with subterranean caverns.

I had only a few hours, no rope and a poor flashlight, but I clambered through several of those gloomy grottoes. One of them had a metal ladder tied in place to facilitate entry past the difficult upper ten feet of the abyss. A narrow crevice then led down, down, until I stood a hundred feet below the entrance, on a ledge covered with fine dirt; dark holes beyond my flashlight's beam adumbrated deeper crannies. From charcoal graffiti on the walls, dating back to 1931, I deduced a long history of local exploration. A wire-mesh screen in the dirt meant someone had sifted for artifacts. I found no bones and no stone walls, but there was no telling what six decades of pothunters had removed from the cavern, nor what secrets the recesses of the neighboring fissures held.

As I climbed back to the surface my blood tingled with a faintly illicit excitement. The enigma of the Mogollon catacombs has only begun to unfold.

Zuni official Owen Bobelu surveys the site of Casa Malpais. As a new era of collaboration gets under way, he wants archaeologists to share with his people any information about their discoveries at the ruins.



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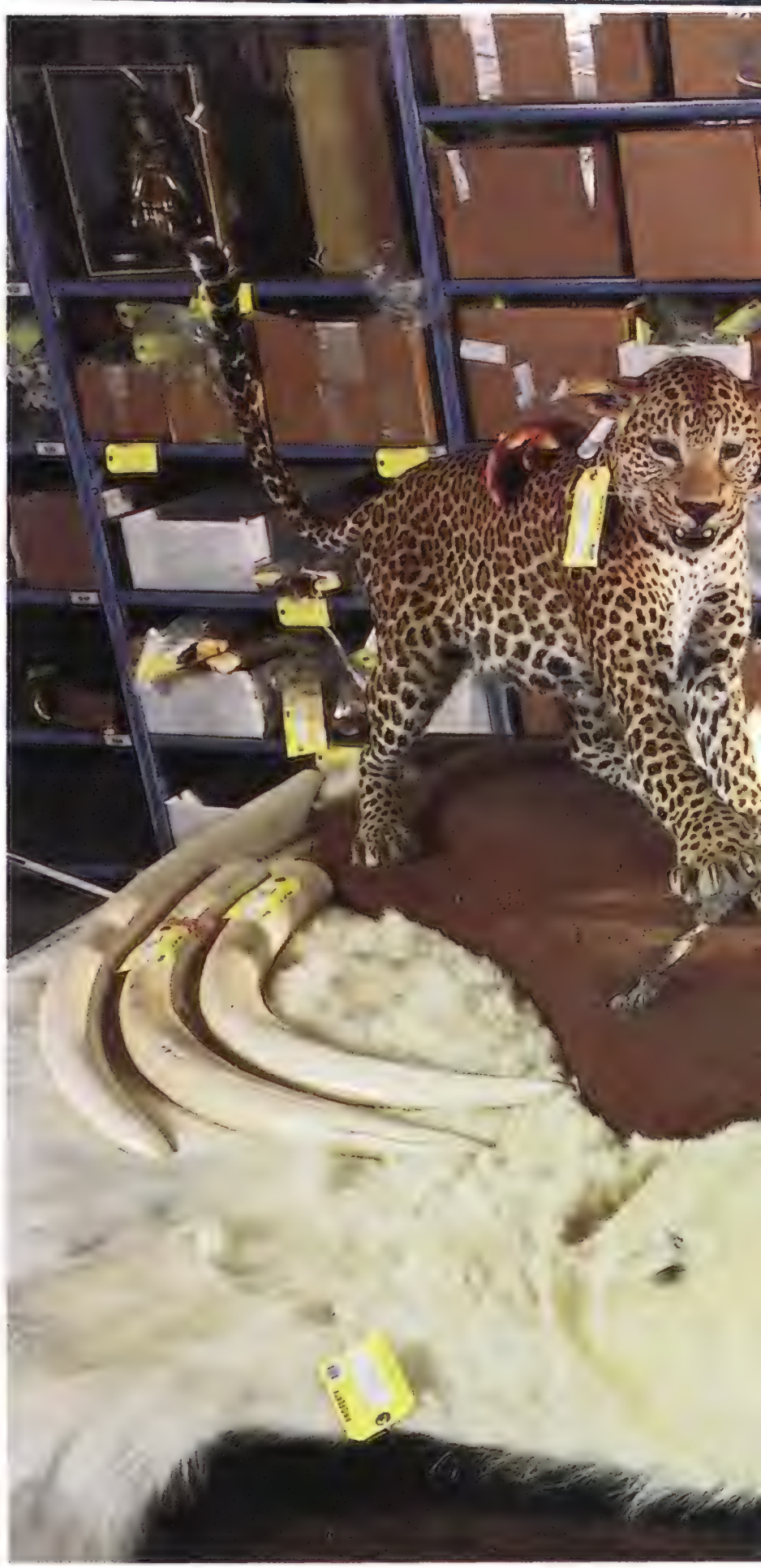
By Nancy Shute

The lab sleuths who help solve crimes against wild animals

It's not yet three years old, but already this state-of-the-art forensics lab is hailed as the Scotland Yard of endangered species



Illegal wildlife goods surround three staff members at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory.

The Bengal tiger staring balefully from the top of the stainless-steel counter is in no condition to harm anyone who ventures near, since all that remains of him is his head. The creature, dead for eight months, was killed under suspicious circumstances in Texas, and now three criminal investigators at the National Fish and Wildlife Forensics Laboratory in Ashland, Oregon, are about to find out how. Nancy Thomas, a veterinary pathologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), steps up to the counter. Thomas is on loan from the National Wildlife Health Research Center in Madison, Wisconsin. Wearing a lab coat, a plastic apron and latex gloves, she calmly peels back the big cat's orange-and-black fur, picks up a plastic-handled scalpel and starts carving into the massive musculature. Ed Espinoza, the lab's chief criminalist, holds a six-inch plastic ruler along the head for scale, while Kent Oakes, a senior forensic scientist, snaps pictures. A tape recorder protected by a plastic bag hums on the counter. "You see the perforation?" Thomas asks, pointing at the newly exposed ear canal.

She removes the ear. Espinoza picks it up and peers in. "These guys had an awfully good aim if none of this is scratched," he observes.

"Well," Oakes says, "if the tiger was sleeping . . ."

"They wouldn't bump into anything until they were pretty far down, where the ear canal would take a turn," Thomas comments, pointing to a bony ridge in the skull. "So somehow they found this and introduced the ice pick there, if that's what they did." She gently scrapes more flesh from the skull, revealing a tiny perforation in the bone. "We didn't do that," she says.

Oakes cranes over her shoulder. "It is an interesting hole in that it's not consistent with a stabbing type," he notes. "There's no fracture."

"Yes there is, a bit," Thomas replies. She scrapes again. "Bingo!" she cries, pointing to a line of perforations running from the first. She stands back as Oakes takes a few more photographs. "What we've got to do

Both Rhoda Ralston and Darrell Hegdahl, holding a rifle used in tests, are technicians. Tom Rayl (right) is chief of the lab's evidence and property section. The shiny creature in center is a mounted green turtle.

is find out whether the animal was alive when these holes were made," Thomas says. "I don't know if we'll be able to see much damage to the brain." She reaches for her bone saw.

Half an hour later, the tiger's brain lies exposed on a plastic cutting board. "I think we've got it," Thomas declares, beaming. "These are the lateral ventricles, and they're all full of blood. Any jury member should be able to see this." The hemorrhaging visible there and elsewhere in the brain indicates that the animal was indeed alive when the holes were made. The doctor bounces on her heels like a 5-year-old. "It's satisfying, it's just so satisfying."

Ed Espinoza takes a last look at the remains of the tiger in the sink. "When they first brought him in he looked so majestic."

Tiger necropsies are all in a day's work at the Oregon lab. Although it has been in operation for less than

Photographs by Randall Hyman

Director Ken Goddard holds blueprints of the facility that, jokers said, previously existed in his briefcase.

In serology lab, Steven Fain inspects blood and tissue samples used to ascertain animals' DNA "fingerprints."

three years, this highly specialized facility is already recognized as a key resource in the battle to curb contraband traffic in wild animals and wildlife parts and products—a worldwide problem that's getting worse. The legal trade in everything from Australian kangaroo hides and live lovebirds from Tanzania, to tropical fish from Southeast Asia and lizard shoes from Argentina, is a big business, with annual revenues conservatively estimated at about $6 billion. The illicit traffic involves the smuggling and killing of endangered or protected species, and the illegal taking of other animals. It is thought to be generating somewhere between $2 billion and $3 billion a year. A "record book" elk head may bring $20,000, a tiger skin $10,000, and a bear's paw and gallbladder (used in Oriental medicines) up to $5,000. Objects fashioned from unlawfully killed creatures range from the beautiful to the bizarre: elephant-trunk ice buckets, jewel-encrusted sea turtle heads, toad coin purses with zippers up the tummy, and stools made of elephant feet.

The lab gets involved in a case when federal, state or international law-enforcement officials uncover evidence—perhaps a finished product or maybe just the remains of a dead animal—that requires identification or forensic analysis. "These cases are complicated and difficult to prosecute," says James Kilbourne, chief of the agency in the Department of Justice that handles violations of U.S. wildlife laws and international wildlife treaties. There are seldom any witnesses to such crimes; they usually take place in wild and remote areas; the evidence often does not turn up until long after the crime itself has been committed, and by then it may well have been damaged or radically altered. "The forensics lab gives us the capacity to become a great deal more sophisticated in our investigations," Kilbourne says.

Forensic science is the application of the physical sciences to the evaluation of evidence for judicial consideration. Its historical roots can be traced back to the origins of legal medicine in sixth-century China. However, it was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional detective Sherlock Holmes, according to Richard Saferstein's *Criminalistics: An Introduction to Forensic Science*, who "applied the newly developed principles of serology, fingerprinting, firearm identification, and questioned-document examination long before their value was first recognized and accepted by real-life criminal investigators." Today there are about 350 federal, state and local crime labs in the United States. They are able to analyze physical evidence ranging

Nancy Shute wrote in August 1991 about a group of Unalaskans who crossed the Bering Sea for a reunion with their kinsmen in the Soviet Far East.

from a simple set of fingerprints on a glass to the complex genetic "fingerprint" contained within a human cell. "In traditional testimony juries have to rely on the perceptions of others, but forensic evidence often proves irrefutable," says John Hicks, assistant director of the laboratory division of the FBI, which pioneered the use of DNA fingerprinting in the United States.

Wildlife-crime busters have come to rely on this kind of evidence, too. Increasingly, they are finding themselves up against international networks armed with high-tech weaponry and electronic gear—poachers, for example, who use scientific tracking equipment to locate hibernating radio-collared bears in the Appalachians. Physical traces of such crimes are hard to come by and often fragmentary in nature. In the old days—five or ten years ago—agents found themselves begging for forensic backup. "We relied on museums and universities," says John Neal, one of the 205 agents of the USFWS who investigate federal crimes against wildlife. "But they're not forensics experts." Some wildlife cases were lost because of delays in getting solid forensic evidence; others were never prosecuted.

A biochemistry major turned cop

In 1979, the USFWS hired Ken Goddard, then chief criminalist of the Huntington Beach, California, police department, to set up a wildlife forensics lab. A criminalist is an expert in the scientific study and evaluation of physical evidence in the commission of crimes. Before Goddard got into police work, the closest the genial biochemistry major had ever come to it was when he took a judo class from a Riverside County, California, deputy sheriff during college. After one particularly strenuous session, the deputy had to drive Goddard to the hospital. On the way, he leaned over and growled: "Ever think of becoming a cop?" He ended up chauffeuring his dazed recruit directly from the emergency room to a job interview.

Goddard spent the next ten years scouring the sites of humanity's most heinous acts in search of the subtle clues that link victim, suspect and crime scene, the holy trinity of detective work. He was intrigued by forensic science's heady mix of laboratory precision and true-crime thrills, but he never did master the macho imperatives of law enforcement. For example, helping other officers quell a disturbance in a saloon one day, he suddenly found himself facing an angry brawler wielding a beer bottle. "No, wait!" he yelled. "I'm the scientist!"

When he arrived in Washington, D.C., Goddard discovered that the USFWS had not yet asked Congress for funds to pay for the forensics lab. For eight long years, the joke at headquarters was, "Ken Goddard's briefcase is the forensics lab." He vented his frustra-

Forensic ornithologist Beth Ann Sabo matches feathers on a craft item with those of a snowy owl specimen.

Peter Dratch compares protein profiles of different deer species with profiles of unknown tissue samples.

Ed Espinoza and JoAnn Shafer take core samples from an elephant tusk as part of research on dating ivory.

The Scotland Yard of wildlife crime

Unlawfully imported snakeskin sneakers, python hide, were seized by inspection officials at ports of entry.

tions by writing *Balefire* and *The Alchemist*, a pair of crime thrillers notable not only for their vivid scientific methodology but also for an alarmingly high body count among law-enforcement officers.

It wasn't until the state of Oregon loaned land on the campus of Southern Oregon State College in Ashland, a bucolic little town of 16,000 tucked into the foothills of the Siskiyou Mountains, that Congress appropriated the $4.5 million needed for a state-of-the-art laboratory. The 23,000-square-foot building was completed in the fall of 1988; it took more than another year for Goddard to recruit the dozen scientists and support staff he would need to create a new discipline: wildlife forensic science.

Half of the troops came from police crime labs, the other half, from museums and universities. "This had never been done before," says Goddard, a tall, white-haired 45-year-old who pads around the lab in jeans and sneakers, talking in overdrive. "It's fascinating research. The science is really cutting-edge. Then we immediately jump into the ice-cold real world of the judicial system. It's fun. It's a pure kick."

Wandering the lab's skylighted halls is a kick, too. In the conference room Irene Brady, a nature writer and illustrator in her spare time, huddles over a table with two special agents sorting slides of oil-blackened otters and eagles. Brady will use them to design courtroom exhibits for a federal oil-spill lawsuit.

A freezer stacked with eagles

The technical support section is stocked with video cameras, tiny microphones and homing devices for undercover operations. Tom Rayl, chief of the evidence and property section, presides over a cavernous warehouse at one end of the building that is cluttered with sea turtle mandolins, eagle-head paperweights and other gewgaws. Many of them have been confiscated from unwary tourists. A walk-in freezer is stacked to the ceiling with stiff bodies of bald and golden eagles. This is the National Eagle Repository. The birds, many of which were killed illegally or by accident, are kept here while they await distribution to native Americans, who convert them into religious artifacts.

The morphology lab is where wildlife and various parts and products are visually and microscopically identified. Chief morphologist Stephen Busack and geneticist Peter Dratch laugh and curse as they wrestle a six-foot-long cougar out of a freezer. Beth Ann Sabo, a forensic ornithologist who apprenticed for eight years with Roxie Laybourne, the legendary feather expert at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, sits quietly in a corner, sorting a stack of red-tailed hawk feathers. "In a wildlife crime, the evidence tends to be part of your victim," Goddard explains. "The big

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Two examples of how grotesque illegal wildlife "products" can be: a bejeweled hawksbill turtle head (left) and the beak of a young bald eagle. They are meant to be used as paperweights.

job is to relate the parts and products to the species."

To that end, the morphology section is assembling a huge collection of animal feathers, skin and bones that can be used to help identify crime victims. It is also searching zoos and universities around the world for known specimens of wild animals that have commercial or sporting value. "Crocodilian purses come in all the time, but I don't have a complete 'library' of crocodilian standards," explains Busack, a herpetologist. "We have to demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt what species a purse is made from. If we can't do that, we're going to lose cases."

The serology section and its DNA unit identify wildlife, too, but by a bit of blood or tissue or even a few cells. When he's not wrestling with frozen cougars in the morphology lab, Peter Dratch, an authority on deer genetics, is assembling a bank of tissue samples of the large game animals that are often involved in hunting violations. From that bank, Steven Fain, a DNA expert, is creating a genetic database of DNA "fingerprints" that can be used to identify crime victims. He figures it may take five years of collection and research before he can fingerprint and interpret a dozen species.

The lab's criminalistics section employs forensic techniques that are familiar to any viewer of *Quincy, M.E.* or other television crime dramas. These include detecting gunshot residues and mapping a bullet's trajectory through flesh.

The facility's first and greatest success involved the simplest of questions: What is ivory? In June 1989, a worldwide ban on trading ivory from the endangered African elephant went into effect. A similar ban on ivory from Asian elephants had been established in 1976. This meant law-enforcement officials had to be able to distinguish elephant ivory from other kinds. "The law caught us with our pants down," says Ed Espinoza, a chemist and criminalist who taught forensic science and consulted in homicide investigations in Northern California before joining the lab. "No one had ever defined ivory scientifically."

Ivory traders had it all figured out. Shortly after the ban went into effect, shipments of elephant ivory misleadingly labeled "mammoth" began showing up at ports around the world. The challenge for Espinoza and his colleagues: learn how to tell the difference between modern elephant ivory and Ice Age mammoth ivory, which is legal to trade. "We tried all kinds of stuff," Espinoza says, playing with the age-yellowed ivory carving of an old Chinese man that sits on his desk. "On very old samples, the outsides fluoresced under ultraviolet light. We were all excited about that until we got a shipment in which the outsides had been removed."

Eventually Espinoza noticed differences in the angles of the grain lines, called Schreger lines, in cross sections of ivory from ancient and modern beasts. "The biggest problem was explaining why." For that, Espinoza turned to his colleague Mary-Jacque Mann, a senior forensic scientist who spent ten years as a scanning electron microscopist at the Smithsonian. Schreger lines are created by undulating rows of hollow tubes, called dentinal tubules. Mann's microscope showed that in ancient ivory, these tubules were packed much more densely than in modern elephant ivory. When mammoth ivory is carved, cross sections are exposed to reveal Schreger lines that form angles of 90 degrees or

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Peering into microscope and taking notes, Espinoza examines a polar bear skin for incriminating evidence.

less. In modern elephant ivory, they form angles of 115 degrees or more. Measure the angles and you've got your beast. Within five months, Espinoza and company had solved the mystery. "It's a very simple, nondestructive way of positively distinguishing these two kinds of ivory," he says.

But the work didn't stop there. Espinoza's people went on to look at all of the different types of ivory and ivory substitutes, and came up with a set of physical descriptions that distinguish one type from another. The result: a handy little guide that can be used by just about anyone.

When Rich McDonald got the call from Olympic National Park in Washington, he knew it was going to be bad. A ranger there had just found the carcass of a spotted owl nailed to a sign at the park entrance with a typewritten note attached to its breast: "If you think your parks and wilderness don't have enough of these suckers: plant this one." As a USFWS special agent covering the Pacific Northwest, McDonald had spent years patrolling the Olympic Peninsula's dense forests and remote logging towns. "It's one of the last strongholds of the old Wild West," he says. Killing the owl, a mottled brown-and-white bird that has become endangered as its old-growth forest habitat was logged, was a federal crime. Beyond that, it was an attempt to further inflame relations between the region's already-polarized loggers and preservationists.

The perpetrator didn't leave many clues: a Band-Aid, two beer cans, a soda can, a nail, a match. McDonald immediately shipped the evidence to Ashland. "It's just like an investigation of a human murder," the special agent says. "The only difference is you can't go out and interview who the owl was drinking with the night before."

In the search for clues, the lab x-rayed and necropsied the owl carcass, tested the Band-Aid for blood, and scanned the note and cans for fingerprints. It reported back to McDonald that a high-powered rifle had been used to kill the bird, and told him that the creature, an immature male, had been kept in a freezer for some time. McDonald withheld the lab's findings from the press. He figured a $16,000 reward might shake some information loose, and then maybe the lab's report could verify it. But nothing happened.

McDonald knew what he had to do next: get in his battered Chevy Blazer and go work the small towns of the peninsula, just as he had so many times before. In his long career as a special agent, he had spent countless hours routinely checking hunters' licenses and bag limits, but he had also hidden in an attic crawl space above a room where an informant was talking to a suspected poacher who had threatened to blow that informant's head off. McDonald had also arranged undercover wildlife "buys" as elaborate as those involved in any big-time drug bust. In the process, he had been shot at, and his family had been threatened. It's a grim fact that wildlife agents are more likely to be assaulted in the line of duty than are other law-enforcement officers. "Everyone we contact is armed with some kind of weapon," McDonald says. "And we're usually interfering with somebody's 'God-given right' to get out and hunt and fish." Still, he wouldn't trade his job for the world. "It's 99 percent dull routine—and 1 percent sheer terror."

Elk proteins on a bloody knife

Even when the lab is given next to nothing to work with, the experts there are often able to come up with amazing results. Take the case of the hunter who pleaded guilty to killing an elk out of season. A year later the case was overturned on a technicality and remanded for trial. But by then, the evidence, the elk, had been disposed of. The authorities still had a bloodstained knife, which they sent to Ashland for analysis. Using immunodiffusion (a common crime-lab technique that compares antibodies) and electrophoresis (a standard genetic technique that identifies different forms of proteins), the scientists were able to establish that it was indeed elk blood on the knife, and the defendant was found guilty.

McDonald also turned to the lab when he needed help explaining to a grand jury an intricate undercover operation against Columbia River sturgeon poachers. For a year he posed as an affable former logger who bought and sold illegally caught sturgeon out of the back of his truck, making deals 24 hours a

day with a cellular phone and an answering machine. The gigantic fish, many 150 or 175 years old, are sold for their caviar at prices up to $3,100 each. Since the poachers concentrate on the older, breeding fish, the black market threatens the survival of the species.

When it was time to close down the operation, McDonald had to wear a concealed tape recorder and try to trick one of the bad guys into telling him where the records were kept. When 70 local, state and federal officers finally closed in, he had to maintain his cover. "I'm getting out of here," he yelped. His fellow officers searched him and nabbed his driver's license before setting him free. Subsequently, the lab prepared elaborate flow charts tracking the black market operation, based on the information provided by McDonald. Those exhibits helped make the complicated case clear to the jury and were instrumental in obtaining convictions.

Notwithstanding the lab's input, the mystery of the spotted owl on the Olympic Peninsula has not been solved. In fact, two more of the birds have been killed and two "look-alike" barred owls as well. On other fronts, however, progress is being made. The demand in the Orient for medicinals concocted from bear gallbladders has fueled a sharp rise in poaching in the United States. In response to that, the folks in Ashland have developed a foolproof way to identify bear gallbladders, thus ensuring that enforcement activities will receive solid scientific support.

As for that Bengal tiger, the lab's investigation revealed that the drugged animal had been stabbed in the brain with an ice pick. The fastidiously documented findings backed up testimony that the defendant, once the proprietor of a business specializing in exotic wildlife decor, was killing tigers he had purchased from a petting zoo and selling the hides.

Faced with the evidence, the man pleaded guilty to a violation of the Endangered Species Act and was sentenced to a year in jail. "We're very happy," says agent John Neal. "The people at the lab made the case much, much stronger. Within two or three months they had done their research, they had people ready to testify, and they had prepared effective courtroom displays. It was a very professional job."

Bald eagle is one of many found dead and sent to the lab. The remains are held in a freezer until they can be given to native Americans, who use them in preparation of artifacts for religious ceremonies.

It was only 2:00 PM and Keith Heavenridge already knew the rest of his day wasn't going to turn out like he had planned. Heavenridge was already late for a 1:45 meeting. Leaving his office, he saw that his car was blocked by his wife's Volvo.

"I have to admit I was a little annoyed at the time," he recalls. "Instead of waiting for her to move it, I decided to take the Volvo."

This action would take on greater meaning thirty-five minutes later. Because as Keith was turning onto Sunset Boulevard, a twisting, turning, four-lane highway with no median to separate traffic, another car came flying around a blind turn and, crossing four lanes and speed bumps, lost complete control, hitting the Heavenridge Volvo GLE wagon head on.

"I don't even think I took my foot off of the gas," says Heavenridge. "He came out of nowhere. All I remember is this crunching feeling to the very core of my body."

"I went down to the impound where the tow truck had taken the car after the accident," Cecily Heavenridge remembers, "and when I got to the car, I couldn't believe it. My stomach got all knotted. I mean there was nothing left of the front of the car. Nothing. It was crunched right up to where Keith was sitting.

"I know in my heart I would have been a widow raising three kids if he had not been driving my car that day."

"The front of the car collapsed like an accordion just like I had read it would," Keith Heavenridge says. "The air bag went off. The first few moments I just sat there, doing an inventory of my condition. I was a little shaken up, my wrist hurt from banging the windshield, but that's about it. I then opened the door, got out and walked over to check on the other driver."

Beginning with Volvo's unique safety cage construction developed in 1944, to crumple zones and child safety innovations, to today, on 700 and 900 series cars, a side impact protection system years ahead of government requirements, Volvo design engineers have introduced 47 new safety features to their vehicles in almost as many years.

"An experience like this teaches you that you can be the safest driver in the world and because someone else is not paying attention or because of the circumstances at a given point in time, you can get into an accident," Heavenridge says.

There are 34,000,000 accidents each year in this country and over 40,000 deaths. To look at these statistics is at the same time frightening and deceiving. Because at a distance, numbers become anonymous and accidents only happen to "other people."

Keith Heavenridge knows how false this sense of security can be. As he stands by Sunset Boulevard recounting his accident, another one almost takes place. Tires screech. Horns blare.

He just shakes his head and walks away.

Each year, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety studies the occupant death rates in thousands of accidents.* In its April 1991 study of 1984-88 models, the car with the lowest fatality rate was the Volvo 240 wagon. Each year IIHS has been analyzing accident statistics, Volvo has been at the top or near the top in their respective model categories. No car manufacturer can guarantee you will survive an accident. No company can say you won't have an injury. But statistics show and crash tests demonstrate that some cars can offer more protection than others.

"I thought of how close we had come with Keith's accident to being alone," Cecily Heavenridge says. "I never want to be in that position again. Since then, we've bought two more Volvos."

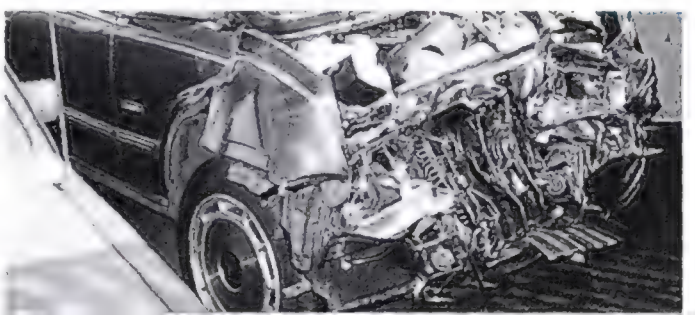
There are certain moments in your life when your entire world becomes crystal clear. When all your priorities are in order. For Keith Heavenridge, that moment came on January 3, 1990 at 2:35 PM.

It is now almost two years later. Keith Heavenridge is having his picture taken for this advertisement. In another room in his house, his son, David, nine years old, picks up a photo taken of his father's crumpled Volvo after the crash.

"My dad was in this car."

Drive safely.

VOLVO



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*Study published April 1991 of 134 biggest selling 1984-88 model year cars during 1985-89 calendar years.

Volvo Saved My Life Club Member, Jan. 3, 1990
KEITH HEAVENRIDGE:
"There are certain moments when your entire world becomes crystal clear."

By Henry Adams

Will the real William Harnett please stand up

Today, both he and John Peto are recognized as masters of trompe l'oeil painting; but for a while, it was an odd case of mistaken identity

This picture of Harnett and Peto, taken in Peto's Philadelphia studio, proves the two knew each other.

In the mid-1930s, New York art dealer Edith Halpert acquired a very odd-looking 19th-century American painting by an artist whom no one had heard of. His name was William Michael Harnett. Although entitled *The Faithful Colt* (an old printed label was pasted on the back), the painting depicted not a frisky horse but a Colt .45 revolver hanging against a weathered barn door. Both the realism of the piece, which captured every nick and splinter of the weathered wood, and the powerful sense of abstract design were remarkable. Ingeniously, Harnett had signed the canvas at the lower left, making the letters of his name look as though they had been whittled into the barn door with a knife.

Halpert sold the painting to the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, Connecticut (where the Colt firearms factory is located), and put out the word that she was interested in finding more paintings by Harnett. Gradually more appeared, and one by one Halpert sold them to a distinguished group of museums and collectors: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Phillips Collection, Smith College, and such individuals as Nelson Rockefeller and Alfred Barr, director of the Museum of Modern Art.

Before long, Harnett was recognized as a major American master, yet virtually nothing was known about his career. Consequently, in 1946, with Halpert's encouragement, a young art historian with the memorable surname of Frankenstein began the first scholarly study of Harnett's life. Halpert had managed to purchase a scrapbook of clippings about Harnett's work, which had belonged to one of his friends, but many mysteries remained to be solved. One of the first challenges was to explain why Harnett had painted in two fairly distinct styles, one hard-edged, meticulous and somewhat dry in feeling, with microscopic detail; the other looser and more impressionistic, with a more powerful sense of mood.

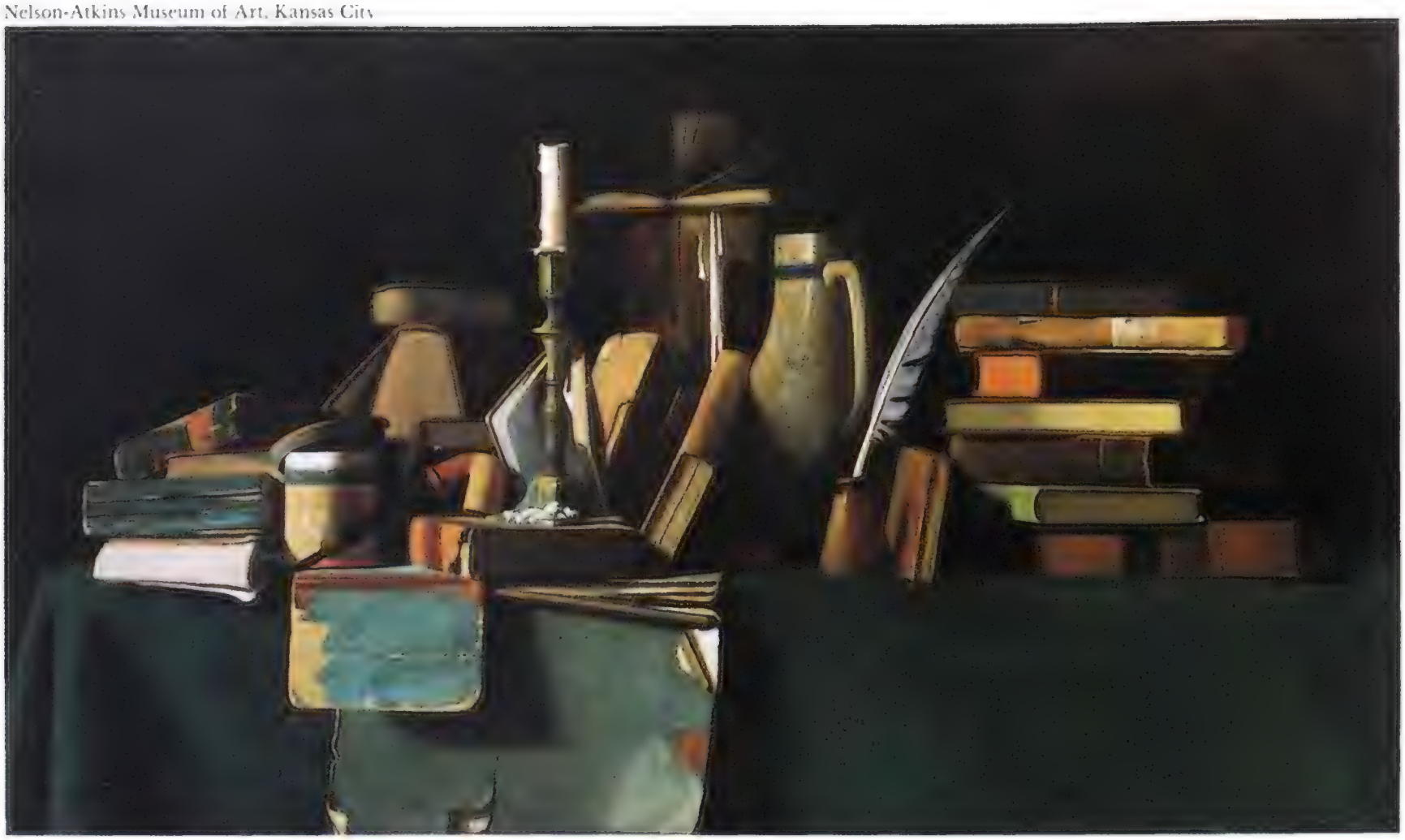
One of the clippings in the scrapbook contained a brief reference to someone named John F. Peto, and acting on a tip from a friend, Alfred Frankenstein decided to stop by Peto's house, located in the seaside resort community of Island Heights, New Jersey. He found a large, gloomy, multigabled structure with shaded, wraparound verandas and mazelike corridors inside. Though Peto himself had died many years before, the place was still inhabited by his daughter, Helen Smiley, who raised mink in the backyard.

The big surprise came when Frankenstein entered Peto's studio, a large, two-story room with a cathedral ceiling. To his amazement, Frankenstein found that the artist's workplace was still intact, with the pipes, mugs and books Peto had painted arranged on shelves and tables, and with dozens of small, dust-covered canvases stacked around the room. Moreover, when he began to examine these canvases he made an amazing discovery: their style was identical with that of the "soft style" works then attributed to Harnett. After a sleepless night spent sorting all the clues, Frankenstein figured out that the artist then

Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford

A dealer's rediscovery in the 1930s of an 1890 work, *The Faithful Colt,* set off a search for more paintings by William Harnett. That's when it became clear that some of the paintings with his signature were not his.

Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City



known to the world as "Harnett" had actually been two different men.

This hypothesis was later confirmed by careful technical examination. In fact, about half the "Harnett" signatures on the 14 or so paintings that Edith Halpert had handled were false. Harnett's real signature was more precise than the imitations, and also contained a slight inner curve on the two sides of the *H*, which was generally not found in the forgeries. In some cases Sheldon Keck, the conservator who worked with Frankenstein, was actually able to locate an authentic Peto signature under the false Harnett signature. Peto himself had not been guilty of any attempt at forgery; the false signature had been added long after his death.

Just to prove his theory that false signatures had been added to Peto's work, Frankenstein decided to try an experiment. With Helen Smiley's consent, he took one of the small paintings in Peto's studio and released it on the art market at an auction in New Jersey. Within six months the painting was being offered for sale in New York—with one significant "improvement": a Harnett signature had been added. The mystery was solved. Clearly, someone—probably an unscrupulous dealer—was adding a Harnett signature to Peto's paintings so they would sell at a higher price.

Since Peto's works were already owned by many major museums and private collectors, Frankenstein's dramatic sleuthing immediately established John Frederick Peto as one of the major figures in American art. Since that time, however, debate has continued about the respective abilities of Peto and Harnett.

Since Alfred Frankenstein's death, the reigning guru in this area of scholarship has been John Wilmerding, the Sarofim Professor of American Art at Princeton University. In 1983, Wilmerding organized an exhibition at the National Gallery of Art that traced Peto's development through a series of his finest works. This year, three scholars—Doreen Bolger, Marc Simpson and Wilmerding—have organized a near definitive exhibition of Harnett's work, which will include about 50 of his paintings and will be accompanied by a major catalog. Funded by Alamo Rent A Car, with additional support from both the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts, "William M. Harnett" opens on the 14th of this month at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, where it will remain on view until mid-June. It will then travel to the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth (July 18-October 18), the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (November 14-February 14, 1993) and the National Gallery of Art (March 14-June 13, 1993).

This retrospective of Harnett's work will undoubt-

The author, who is curator of American art at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, wrote about Thomas Eakins in the November 1991 issue.

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Comparison of *Books on a Table* (opposite), painted by Peto, and Harnett's *Banker's Table* (right), reveals differences in the artists' styles. Peto's books and other objects sit in disarray in harsh light, while Harnett's objects are bathed in warm glow and placed carefully, suggesting a more ordered universe.

edly renew scholarly debate over the respective merits of the two artists. Who was more significant? Who was more original? How did the artistic personalities of the two men differ?

The organizers hope that visitors to the exhibition will also ask some of these questions. (Although there are no works by Peto in the current exhibition, the catalog for the earlier Peto exhibition provides numerous reproductions of his works. It bears the hefty title *Important Information Inside: The Art of John F. Peto and the Idea of Still-Life Painting in Nineteenth-Century America.*) But before confronting the paintings, it is helpful to have some sense of the artistic tradition that Harnett and Peto belonged to, and the different ways in which they embodied it in their own work.

Today we know that Harnett and Peto were only two of the dozens of 19th-century American artists who produced paintings of the type known as trompe l'oeil—literally, "fool the eye"—in which humble objects are treated with an uncanny degree of realism. One of the tricks of this sort of painting is to portray objects that in themselves are relatively flat—such as currency, postage stamps or envelopes—so that the eye can't use binocular vision to see if the objects possess real depth. Consider, for example, Harnett's painting entitled *Mr. Hulings' Rack Picture* (p. 58). In reality, the painting is considerably more deceptive than a photograph of it, since the letters and envelopes are exactly the size of real ones. Even after we've persuaded ourselves that the envelopes are painted, we need to study the picture to be convinced that the stamps are not pasted on.

For some reason, most of the artists who made trompe l'oeil paintings were in some way associated with Philadelphia, where one can trace this tradition practically to the time of the American Revolution in the work of Charles Willson Peale (SMITHSONIAN, April 1979). Truly a man of the Enlightenment, Peale not only worked as a painter but exhumed the first complete mastodon in America, collected specimens of natural history and founded the first major American museum. Peale's most memorable painting, *The Staircase Group* (p. 56), marks the beginning of the American trompe l'oeil tradition. It shows the artist's two sons, Raphaelle and Titian, pausing on a staircase and looking out into a room. From a distance it is hard to tell whether this is a painting or the real thing. Peale placed a genuine wooden step in front of the painting, blurring the distinction between the actual world and the painted one. It is said that George Washington was fooled into thinking the figures were real and courteously bowed to them as he entered the room.

This interest in trompe l'oeil was continued by Peale's son Raphaelle, who produced a number of clever paintings in this vein. Without doubt the most unusual is his *Venus Rising from the Sea—A Deception*, a painting of a naked woman whose body has a cloth

Philadelphia Museum of Art

Charles Willson Peale's witty *Staircase Group* (1795) marked start of trompe l'oeil tradition in America.

napkin thrown over it. From the time of Raphaelle Peale, however, until that of William Michael Harnett—roughly 50 years—there is a hiatus in this tradition, and in fact it is not even clear whether Harnett was aware of the work of the Peales. To Harnett is due the revival of this type of painting in the late 19th century. He had many followers, creating a whole school of trompe l'oeil still life.

Harnett was born in Ireland in 1848 but moved to Philadelphia as a small child. His family was extremely poor. His father died when Harnett was still a youth, and he was forced to help support his mother and sisters. After working as an errand boy he eventually found employment with a firm that did silver engraving. He was able to take some night classes at the Philadelphia Academy of Art and in New York, where he lived for several years, at the National Academy of Design and the Cooper Institute. But money was always tight. "I could not afford to hire models as the other students did," he told a New York *News* reporter years later. "I was forced to paint my first picture from still-life models. These were a pipe and a German beer mug. I think it brought $50."

The sum seemed to Harnett a small fortune, and with that encouragement he decided to abandon engraving and concentrate on painting for a livelihood. Throughout his career he worked meticulously, concentrating on a single painting at a time, creating a fineness of detail worthy of a bank-note engraver. Indeed, the most widely publicized episode of his career occurred after he began to paint highly realistic renderings of money—and was arrested by Treasury Department agents for forgery. Fortunately, he was released without being charged, but he quickly gave up that sort of subject matter.

Portraying everyday subjects with precision

With such a painstaking painting technique, Harnett had little stylistic development in the usual sense. Nearly every one of his works is incredibly precise and realistic. Certain general developments, however, are evident. Early in his career, Harnett painted intimate pictures hardly larger than the palm of one's hand. They portray everyday subjects: a pipe, some matches and a tobacco canister, a newspaper placed beside a mug on a table. As his skill improved he moved on to large-scale arrangements. *After the Hunt*, the most ambitious of these at nearly six feet in height, includes an array of hinges, horseshoes, powder horns, hunting horns, hats, jugs, pistols, muskets and dead game, all hanging on a barn door (p. 63).

As he matured, Harnett developed an ever shrewder mastery of the tricks of pictorial illusion. The space in his paintings tends to grow shallower—and more

Metropolitan Museum of Art

Harnett follower John Haberle painted *A Bachelor's Drawer* in the 1890s; it includes humorous touches such as the clipping (center) that reports, "A Newspaper Critic Pronounces a Picture a Fraud, but Retracts."

deceptive—and the play of gravity more complex. In the late works the objects are often shown precariously balanced against one another or hanging from a thread, increasing the feeling of emotional tension.

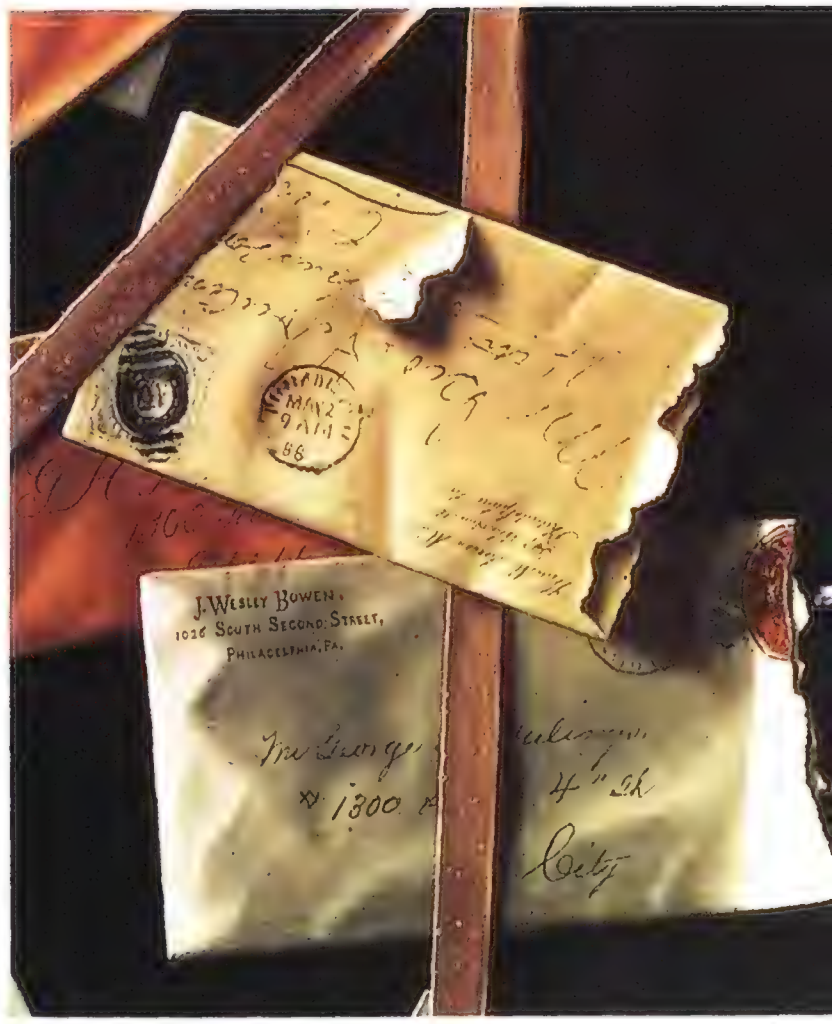
One of the distinctive features of Harnett's work is its masculine subject matter—smoking and hunting themes predominate. In the 19th century it was not proper for women to smoke, and hunting was largely a masculine pursuit. Harnett seems to have sold most of his paintings to energetic, self-made businessmen and financiers. Interestingly, he seldom displayed his paintings in art exhibitions, favoring more business-oriented settings, such as store windows, saloons and industrial fairs. *After the Hunt* hung in a famous New York saloon at 8 Warren Street, near City Hall, where women were admitted only on special "visiting days." Indeed, the popularity of this saloon was largely responsible for whatever fame Harnett enjoyed in his lifetime. *After the Hunt* established a tradition of placing trompe l'oeil paintings in saloons, inspiring imitations as far away as Denver.

This kind of recognition, however, did almost as much damage as good to Harnett's reputation; branded as a "saloon painter," he was consequently ignored by the artistic crowd. Harnett was not seriously recognized as an artist until the 1930s, when enough time had passed to allow his paintings to be seen for their formal qualities rather than their social connotations.

Sadly, Harnett died at the height of his ability, at the early age of 44. He had suffered for several years from nephritis; in October 1892, after collapsing unconscious beside the door of his studio on Broadway, he was taken to a hospital where he died two days later.

Harnett had many followers, though none of them ever matched his technical prowess. Along with the straightforward imitators were some jokers who exploited the humorous possibilities of trompe l'oeil painting. The prince of this group was John Haberle of New Haven, Connecticut, whose masterpiece, *A Bachelor's Drawer* (above), took him four years to complete. The painting is an encyclopedia of eye-fooling devices, as well as a witty take on the life of an eccentric bachelor. Pasted onto a bureau drawer are playing cards, theater stubs and a girlie picture (unusually risqué for the period), along with a booklet titled "How to Name the Baby"—suggesting that the protagonist's days of happy bachelorhood are about to end. Various bank notes, one Confederate and another presumably counterfeit, hint at this individual's financial condition. Finally, there are a group of newspaper

Jo Ann and Julian Ganz jr.



Mr. Hulings' Rack Picture (left), painted in 1888, and a detail of the same work (above) reveal why Harnett is regarded as the foremost illusionist in American art.

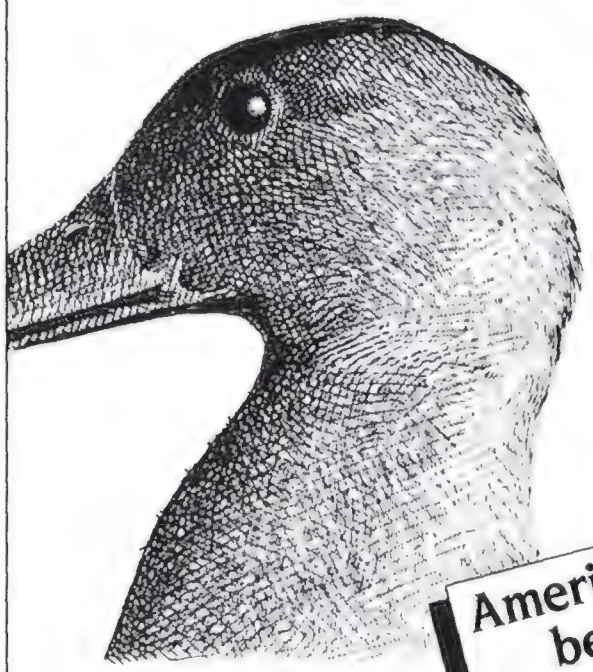
clippings headlined "It Fooled the Cat" and "A Newspaper Critic Pronounces a Picture a Fraud, but Retracts." Here Haberle boasts of his ability to deceive not only art critics but animals. These clippings are particularly deceptive because Haberle built up the pigment a little above the rest of the canvas to create an edge about the thickness of a piece of paper. When you see the actual painting it's hard to believe that these clippings are painted and not just glued down.

After Harnett, the one truly remarkable master of this sort of painting was John Frederick Peto. Although Peto never equaled Harnett's astonishing technique, he did expand the emotional range of trompe l'oeil still life painting. In some ways he created even more powerful and emotionally gripping works than did Harnett himself.

Indeed, although Peto's reputation was once cannibalized by that of Harnett, today, thanks to Alfred Frankenstein's discoveries, he has emerged as the more vividly human of the two men. Born in 1854, Peto was one of four children of Thomas Peto, a dealer in picture frames and an honorary member of the Philadelphia Fire Department. From the time he was a boy, John Frederick seems to have been interested in both music and painting; several sketchbooks survive from his childhood. In 1877 he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, contributing works to its annual exhibitions over the next half-dozen years. An early tintype of him, dating from 1877, shows him holding his cornet, dressed in the uniform of the Third Regiment Band of Philadelphia. Through most of the 1880s, Peto maintained a studio on Chestnut Street in Philadelphia, though in a different block nearly every year. Many art dealers on the street handled the work of William Harnett, and somehow Peto and Harnett became friends; a photograph has survived that shows them together in Peto's studio.

After a decade of work in Philadelphia, Peto went to Cincinnati in 1887, presumably to paint a large canvas for the Stag Saloon. There he met Christine Pearl Smith, 15 years his junior, from nearby Lerado, Ohio. The two were married that June.

Shortly before his wedding, Peto had begun visiting Island Heights, New Jersey, where he played the cornet for camp revival meetings. Two years after marrying, Peto decided to build a house in Island Heights and to settle there permanently. He designed the house himself, and at the time he built it, it had a beautiful,



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National Gallery of Art

James H. Maroney jr.

unobstructed view over open fields to the Toms River. He filled the house with books, musical instruments and art, and in 1893 his daughter, Helen, was born. He was evidently devoted to her; he built her a playhouse and made a point of sending her letters and postcards whenever he traveled. He frequently took photographs of her, then incorporated the images into his paintings.

In many ways, the scenario that Peto created for himself was an idyllic one: a beautiful wife and child, a house in the country, and a life devoted to art and music. Yet in some curious way after he moved to Island Heights, darkness set in. Peto's later years were evidently sad ones, filled with suffering and foreboding.

For one thing, two of his mother's three sisters lived with him and his family, and while one was supportive of his work, the other became demanding and troublesome. As the situation deteriorated, he was forced to lock her in the attic, and she would rattle her door while he struggled to concentrate on his painting. In the dark mood of little paintings like *Lock and Key* (p. 62) it is tempting to see an echo of the gothic drama taking place upstairs.

In addition, Peto was troubled by a protracted lawsuit involving the property of his mother's aunt, who had owned several hundred acres of land near Poughkeepsie, New York, on the banks of the Hudson River. When this aunt was old, her lawyer gained control of her finances and persuaded her to leave him her property. Peto sued to regain possession, necessitating innumerable journeys to Poughkeepsie to press charges, testify and attend to legal details. The case dragged on for years, and Peto did not live long enough to see its settlement. Finally, Peto was stricken with Bright's disease, which eventually caused his death in 1907. As the disease was slow, painful and progressive, it is not surprising that his late work is uneven.

For the art world at large, Peto pretty much disappeared from view after his move to Island Heights. He does not seem to have had a regular dealer, and he sold his paintings for modest sums, many of them to summer tourists.

For years the works of Harnett and Peto were confused, and the distinction between them was not apparent even to many noted connoisseurs. Even Alfred Barr was fooled. Once Frankenstein established that two separate artists existed, however, the differences between their works became more evident. To be sure, Peto modeled his work on that of Harnett, and many of

Who painted which violin? One painting has harsh light, the other warm. One has a vaguely abandoned feeling, the other seems more vibrant and tactile. Peto's painting is at the top, Harnett's at the bottom.

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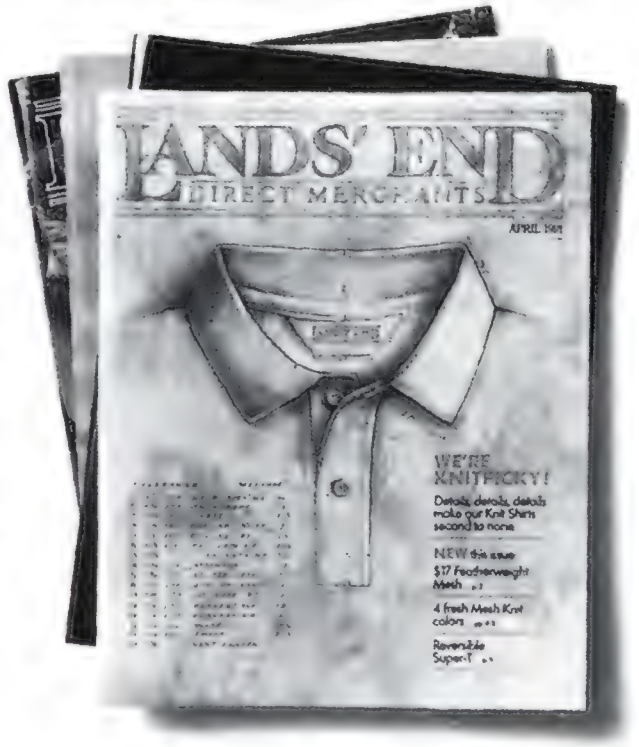

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A late painting by Peto, *Lock and Key* has a gothic mood, perhaps reflecting the artist's unhappy life.

his paintings show almost identical subject matter. But there are two basic differences, one having to do with technique and the other with mood.

Harnett's technique was methodical. He seems to have worked on his paintings one at a time. He seems also to have devoted considerable care to the choice and arrangement of the objects that he painted, and once he had established this composition he did not make major changes.

Peto, on the other hand, worked in a more disorganized way, painting several canvases at a time, and picking them up and discarding them as the impulse struck him, whether or not they were finished. X rays of Peto's paintings reveal that he often made significant changes in design, and in addition, many of his pictures, particularly the later ones, seem to have never been completely finished. Apparently, Peto would build up the energy to work on a large canvas by producing small studies in which he experimented with design and composition. Many of his most pleasing paintings are the small ones, where he could quickly jot down his conception, without getting bogged down with technical difficulties.

When we look at Harnett's *The Faithful Colt*, we can almost feel the different textures of the objects: the cold metal of the gun barrel, the smooth ivory of the handle, the brittle roughness of the weathered wood. Subtle gradations between light and shade make the objects seem real and three-dimensional, and tiny details, such as the fine print in the newspaper clipping, make the illusion convincing. But when we look at Peto's *Lock and Key*, there is little sense of physical substance or texture; the division between light and shade is hard and definite. Yet, while Peto doesn't achieve the same degree of illusion as Harnett, he achieves a more powerful pattern of abstract shapes.

This brings us to the second difference between the work of Harnett and that of Peto, which has to do with the mood, or feeling, their paintings convey. Harnett's world, despite the precarious balance of certain objects, is fundamentally an ordered one. Peto's world is both more disordered and more mystifying. He was fond of dramatically cropping his compositions, of employing strange viewpoints and of showing objects squarely in profile, so that we can't judge their depth or their exact placement in space. While Harnett's objects generally look like fine antiques, Peto's look ordinary and battered, even shabby. Peto's masterpiece may well be the large canvas *Books on a Table*, in which order and disorder seem to compete with each other, since the precariousness of the placement of the objects is counteracted by the order and near symmetry of the triangular composition.

Harnett's painting of essentially the same subject does not have this tension; the books, folded bills, and pen and ink have been placed by a careful hand, and they sit in warm light. Peto's shadows have a flat, deadening blackness unlike anything found in Harnett's work, a blackness suggesting despair. There are few artistic parallels to the dark mood of Peto's late paintings in American art, except perhaps for the late portraits of Thomas Eakins, painted when he, like Peto, was suffering from isolation and neglect.

The differences between the paintings of Peto and Harnett are often subtle; they emerge only after careful looking. But studying the works of these two artists is a task that almost no one can resist. Perhaps it's because, as our world gets more complicated, with competing images and messages thrown at us from all sides, these paintings look better and better. They remind us of how much we love the simple things in life, things with smell and texture. Weathered wood, old leather-bound books, the feel of a feather.

Considered Harnett's masterpiece, *After the Hunt*, almost six feet high, once hung in a New York saloon.

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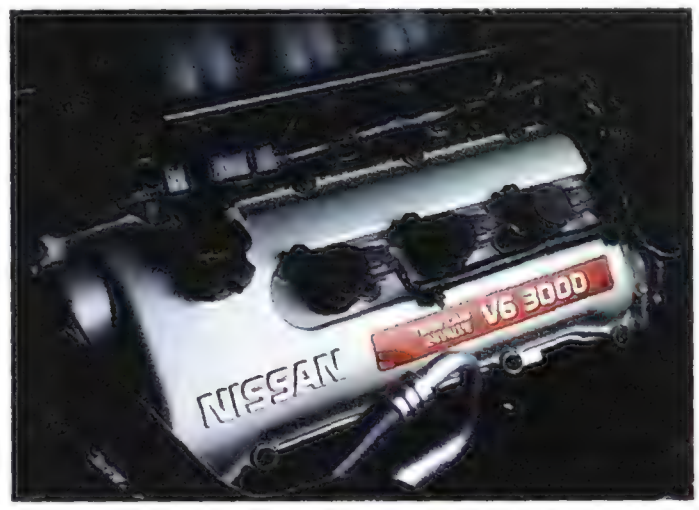

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By Joe Sherman

Upscale or down, nothing says home like a log cabin

Back in the days of the Westward movement, logs were simply the building material at hand; now, they're the building material of choice

Colorado architect Peter Dominick stands in house he designed to echo classicism of Palladio's Villa Rotonda. He believes the popularity of log structures reflects people's desire for a return to the cave and the hearth.

Last year, using Palladio's Villa Rotonda near Vicenza, Italy, as a springboard, Denver-based architect Peter Dominick built a log home in Colorado. Dominick specified white-stained logs, to be erected, he says, "in a nine-square, ticktacktoe form." In the center square the logs create a cruciform with "this incredible, dramatic sense of space" (opposite).

Two thousand miles away, Louis Dandurand, a pre-med student in Vermont, was finishing a protracted labor of love. In 1978 Dandurand had cut 54 red pines. "I spent all summer peeling those damn things with a drawknife," he laughs. "Finally I started building a square fort." Dandurand's hand-built "spiritual retreat" has no chinking, no water and no electricity. When he got married, he and his wife held their wedding reception there.

Linking the past to the future

Between these extremes—architect Dominick's plotted lines and quest for "a vocabulary of architecture that works in the West," and amateur Dandurand's fresh approach ("I didn't know much about building")—lies a renaissance in specialty housing. Call it the comeback of the log cabin. Last year alone, more than 15,000 log homes were built across rural America. Cozy and postmodern, with a pioneer look, they link the past to an energy-efficient future.

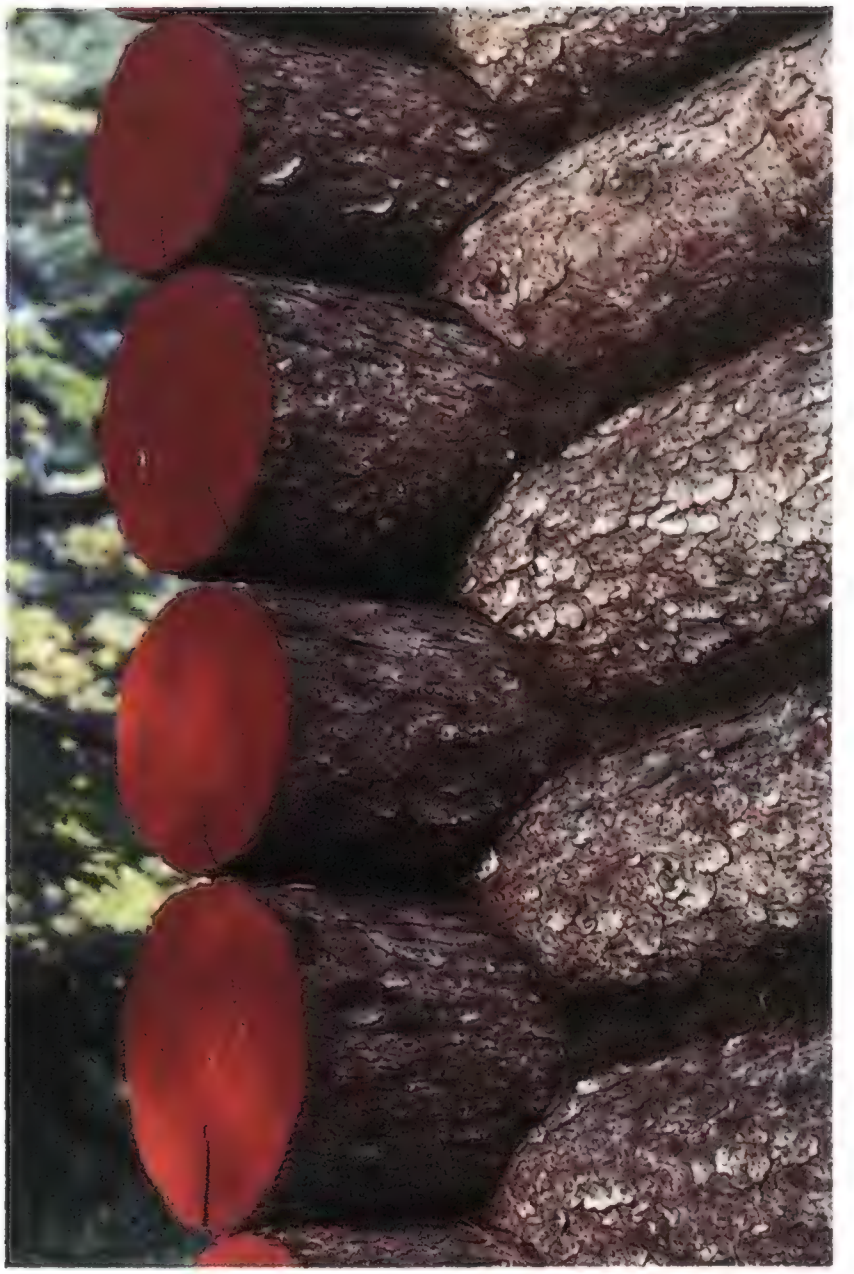
Most of the houses were kits; their uniformly milled logs fit together like a puzzle. Sound familiar? But, unlike the Lincoln Logs of childhood, these kits have ten-inch spikes, high-tech caulkings and great thermal mass. Nationwide, an industry of more than 200 manufacturers, along with hundreds of craftsmen, produce log houses, from starter kits to three-garage sprawls to "materials only" orders that the customer determines.

To see how a log cabin goes from raw product to shelter, I stop in at Josselyn's Sawmill in Jefferson, New Hampshire—"an old-fashioned kind of operation," as owner Keith Josselyn calls it. I find him, a soft-voiced, rugged fellow in his early 40s, in the mill, a revamped 19th-century dairy barn. Josselyn dogs a green balsam to the carriage of his old Lane No. 1 rig, a relic from the 1930s, and guides it toward the singing steel teeth of a 48-inch-diameter blade. The green wood glides through the blade, sawdust flying, bark peeling back like a long knotty tongue. Josselyn, flipping the log masterfully between passes, runs it through several times. His energetic take-away man, Alan Walker, tosses scraps onto a jiggling conveyor (whooshing through a chipper, they will go to a nearby wood-fired utility plant), cuts slab firewood and then pushes the rough-cut log—flat on two sides, five and seven-eighths inches thick—through a planer.

Out the open sides of the mill, I see logs everywhere: piles, stacks, entire cabins. The biggest cabin does triple duty: it's the Josselyn family home, serves as the company model and contains offices. Displayed there are short sections of logs. The most popular are milled on two sides, which sandwich insulation in a finished wall, and round on the other two sides, giving the inside and outside of a cabin a rustic look.

Josselyn got into the log cabin business during its infancy, in the early '70s. Discontented as a high school phys ed teacher, and convinced he could fit into an empty niche in the housing market, he bought a portable one-man sawmill for $300 at an auction and hauled it from site to site, doing everything from scratch: logs, rafters, roofing shingles. Today, he aims for 40 cabins a year.

One person who likes the "no frills" approach of Josselyn's Sawmill is Mark Yelle. I drop by his place and watch Yelle peruse his CAD (Computer Assisted Design) blueprints; Helene Josselyn, Keith's wife, drew them based on sketches provided by Yelle and his wife. We



At Camp Pine Knot, built in the Adirondacks in the 1870s, sawed log ends are painted to protect the wood.

Photographs by Richard Howard

Louis Dandurand started his cabin in 1978; 12 years later, he and his wife Kathryn held wedding party here.

stand on the second floor of his cabin, located on 40 acres adjacent to White Mountain National Forest. Five weeks into "the simplicity of stacking logs," as Josselyn puts it, Yelle has four walls up, a porch on, blue sky overhead. The air is suffused with the sweet scent of green balsam logs. Yelle, an antiques dealer, says the finished cabin is going to "look something like what the early settlers would make." But with a few personal touches, including a cathedral ceiling over the dining area and a solar-conscious living room upstairs.

In the pioneer spirit, Mark Yelle's father, Ernie, is giving his son a hand. Usually the chain saw specialist, today Ernie is struggling with heavy balsam butts. He hauls them up with an orange gripper that looks like old-fashioned ice tongs. On the other end, rather effortlessly swiveling each log into place, is a pony-tailed carpenter, Jace Ericcson, a veteran of 25 log house projects. Ericcson drives long spikes through each log into the tier below, his small sledge ringing in the still air, and moisture beading around each quarter-size head.

"To build a log cabin, all you need are a good chain saw and a good chiropractor," Ernie advises me with a wry grin. "Every once in a while, you have to hang from a log and stretch your back out." Later, huffing over "a monster log," he grimaces beneath his Day-Glo orange cap and mutters a lament probably heard first in the Stone Age, when humans came out of their caves and started stacking logs. "All I got to say is that logs are heavy!"

As a boy growing up in a New England town of clapboard and brick, I loved to get out my View-Master and study the old buildings of the West. The tiny images on those reels were the stuff of dreams for kids all over the country: images with labels like "Mountains ring Colter Bay Cabins," in Grand Teton National Park; or, at Yellowstone, the magnificent Old Faithful Inn. Then, there were the legends about log cabins. There was Daniel Boone, who left a string of log cabins between Pennsylvania and the Dakotas; Abe Lincoln, who learned his ABC's by firelight in an Illinois log cabin (John Wilkes Booth was born in a log cabin as well, northeast of Baltimore); and Ulysses S. Grant, who pondered Lee's defenses around Petersburg, Virginia, from his two-room log headquarters.

The log cabin is, quite simply, the shelter America likes to think of itself as coming of age in. Though its heyday ended before the Civil War, it has become a hallowed symbol of independence and self-sufficiency.

The first log cabins in America were built in the late 1600s, when Swedes and Finns in the Delaware River valley and Germans in the wilderness of eastern Penn-

Joe Sherman is author of Fast Lane on a Dirt Road: Vermont Transformed 1945-1990, *published last year by Countryman Press in Woodstock.*

Keith Josselyn leans on a stack of balsam fir logs at his busy sawmill in Jefferson, New Hampshire. He mills about 9,000 wall logs a year, enough for 40 or so houses.

Mark Yelle got logs for his cabin from Josselyn's Sawmill. He used a butt-and-pass pattern for the corners, simpler than most as it requires few notches. Later he'll trim ends.

sylvania brought centuries of log-working traditions to the New World. They erected cabins, barns, pigsties and smokehouses, and planted crops in the clearings. Over the next 150 years Norwegians, Czechs, Swiss, Belgians, Ukrainians and other immigrants familiar with log construction followed, chopping steadily into the seemingly endless timberlands of eastern America. The Scottish and Irish adopted logs, of which there were precious few left in Ireland, and erected them in the two-room style of the traditional Irish cottage. The English and the Dutch, on the other hand, retained their timber-frame and sawed-board construction, preferring brick and clapboard exteriors to logs.

Wagon trains heading to the Shenandoah Valley, over the Blue Ridge into Tennessee and Kentucky, and up the rivers to the Midwest, carried log-cabin builders. Oaks, pines, firs and cypresses were felled, notched and stacked. The pioneers lugged buckets of mud from riverbanks or armfuls of moss from the forest and pressed them into the gaps. The log house was, writes C. A. Weslager in *The Log Cabin in America*, the "answer to the mobile family's gravest problem—a safe and durable haven that an ordinary family man could build."

Most early cabins were primitive: dirt floors, sod roofs, sliding boards for windows. And contrary to popular opinion, few of these cabins were built of round logs. Most were hand-hewn; that is, each log was flattened with an ax and adze, at least on the two sides that formed the inside and outside of the wall. (The settlers wanted their log houses to look more refined, so they sought flat walls. Ironically, today we want our log cabins to look rustic, so we leave the sides rounded and flatten the tops and bottoms.) Round logs went

Sheds on Western prairie were often hurriedly built, the logs—chinked with moss or dirt—hewn only at ends.

An early New England cabin-raising was a community affair, as in painting by Clyde De Land (1872-1947).

into temporary dwellings, barns and granaries. Trappers and guides on the edge of the perpetually shifting frontier didn't waste time squaring logs, either. They usually roughed up a hut in a day or two and, like many of the animals they pursued, built anew each spring, allowing last year's cabin to rot into oblivion.

The heyday of the log cabin occurred between 1780 and 1850, when settlers forged Westward. The form achieved an apogee of sorts in the Shenandoah Valley in the 1790s. Secure and prosperous, German farmers built fine, two-story, hewn-log farmhouses with rooms for entertaining, called "stubes," occasionally decorating walls with bucolic or religious scenes painted by itinerant artists.

In 1840, the log cabin became the center of political controversy in an unforgettable Presidential campaign. Americans had just weathered their first depression, the Panic of 1837. Banks were closed, people out of work. Yet incumbent Democrat Martin Van Buren didn't believe it was the government's job to provide relief. His opponent, William Henry Harrison, a Whig, seemed to be a shoo-in. Except the Whigs didn't have any fresh ideas either. Then the Democrats suggested that Harrison, if elected, would stay home in his log cabin and sip hard cider from a jug all day, rather than tackling the country's problems. "It is true," countered the astute Harrison, "that part of my dwelling is a log cabin," playing to the plain folk—and neglecting to mention the other 12 rooms in his mansion.

Soon the 67-year-old hero of the Battle of Tippecanoe sounded like he'd lived in a humble log cabin most of his life. Harrison won, but the President-elect, apparently still campaigning on the hale-and-hearty theme, didn't wear a topcoat the cold day of his Inaugural. He caught pneumonia and promptly died. His running mate, John Tyler, an aristocratic Virginian who "wasn't born in a log cabin . . . never lived in one, and privately looked down his nose at anyone who did," according to Weslager, moved into the White House.

By the 1840s, despite being a potent political symbol, the log cabin was fading out. Sawmills, nails and the ascent of Greek Revival style, with its democratic roots in Greece and its templed front facing the street, were all factors. Trains brought manufactured goods, machinery for milled woodwork, hardware; their whistles tolled the end of geographic isolation. Climate and the local forest no longer set architectural limits. In hundreds of towns, log homes got sheathed with clapboard and brick or, in many instances, were simply burned. Logs continued to house livestock, but after the 1850s, fewer and fewer people.

Until the Gilded Age, that is. In 1874, having spent

At Fivemile Lake near Puget Sound, a homestead goes up, the logs of its buildings notched and dressed.

most of his life in Europe, William West Durant was summoned home by his father, Dr. Thomas Durant, owner of the Adirondack Railroad. Dr. Durant wanted William to help him open up the vast, lake-strewn central Adirondacks to tourism and development. His son's first job was to fix up a few primitive log cabins on a thumb-shaped peninsula on Raquette Lake—24 hours from New York City via rail, stagecoach and three small steamers—readying them for an onslaught of well-heeled Victorians who sought a romantic retreat.

Flamboyant and visionary, William Durant proved more artistic than opportunistic. He never capitalized on the wilderness as a tourist mecca. He did, however, over a period of 25 years, carve out a unique branch of American architecture, the "great camp." The backwoods dilettante built one spectacular great camp after another, selling each, at a loss, to a Gilded Age tycoon. In the process Durant also managed to squander his fortune, lose his wife and get dragged through a messy suit by his actress sister for mismanaging their father's estate. By 1904 he was bankrupt and 1916 found him clerking in a hotel in Newcomb. "I was handicapped, by having been brought up without being taught the value of money," Durant admitted very late in life.

A week after visiting Josselyn's Sawmill, I drive over to the central Adirondacks to see Durant's first masterpiece, Camp Pine Knot, a 36-building compound that took 13 years to build. Today, the site is owned by the State University of New York at Cortland and used for outdoor education programs. To reach "the showplace of the woods," as Alfred Donaldson called it in *A History of the Adirondacks*, a place "men took a circuitous route to gain a glimpse of," I bounce across a mile of whitecaps on Raquette Lake in an aluminum outboard with George Fugue, a former director of the camp, at the tiller. Fugue veers sharply into a wooden dock, ties up and leads me through a border of yellow-leaved birch and beneath tall white pines.

The Chalet, the architectural anchor of Pine Knot, is a rather modest, Swiss-inspired cabin of two stories—the bottom story made of logs, the upper framed and faced—with overhanging eaves and balconies (p. 72). "Some of the chinking in there is still the old sphagnum moss," Fugue points out, his finger touching steel-wool-like material between the lower story's spruce logs, still sheathed in bark. "It has a touch of iodine in it. Keeps the insects out."

We walk past two long and low traditional log cabins where guides and other staff lived, then enter Durant's Cottage, a small but masterfully conceived cedar-sided frame building filled with twig furniture. It has a magical aura, the ceiling papered with white birch

Hybrid chalet at Pine Knot—lower story logs, upper story frame—kicked off Adirondack "rustic" style.

In Durant's own cottage at Camp Pine Knot, log theme was used in rafters, bed frame and other furniture.

bark. In the footwell of Durant's desk, the initials "WWD" are spelled out in bark and twigs, and a narrow log four-poster bed is tucked in a corner by the fireplace (above). "My wife and I learned to sleep like two spoons in that bed," Fugue says with a laugh.

By the time we stand in the Living Room Cabin, which is a true log building, Camp Pine Knot as the quintessential great camp has hit me. Each cabin is distinctive, fitting its natural setting. Durant was a stickler for details, and his crew of guides, trappers and farmers created a refined prototype. They bent branches into decorative gables and sheathed exteriors with cedar bark. They added little touches, like the burl-and-bark angel that catches my eye high on the wall of the Living Room Cabin. Everything has a cumulative effect. With Pine Knot, the log cabin has become a style, much as early station wagons had wood panels over the metal body to tie them in our minds to the earlier wooden wagons.

It was nearby Camp Sagamore, started in 1895, that put the irrepressible Durant into an economic straitjacket from which he never extricated himself. The buildings of this camp are frame construction, faced with half-logs to look appropriately rustic. Durant lived in the main lodge with his mother. It had three stories with balconies, a buffalo head in the gable peak, and jutting decorative logs on the corners. He was forced to sell the camp in 1901 to Alfred Vanderbilt, complete with support buildings, farm and a 1,500-acre game preserve. A hundred yards from the lodge, the Vanderbilts soon erected a log-frame bowling alley, two lanes open to the elements, a stone fireplace at one end for warming up.

Combining rustic style with the luxurious, more than 100 great camps, mythical wilderness retreats for the wealthy, were built well into the 20th century. Inspired by them to even grander dimensions, the great log hotels of the West—exemplified by Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone National Park and Glacier Park Lodge at Glacier National Park—went for the baronial look. Seventy-five men worked a year and a half on "Oom-Coo-La-Mush-Tah," as the Blackfeet dubbed mammoth Glacier Park Lodge. "Big Tree Lodge," the white man's translation, was apropos—pillarlike 40-foot Douglas firs support the lobby. Old Faithful Inn, designed by architect Robert Reamer in 1903, has a stunning lobby encircled by twisted lodgepole pine balconies. Its centerpiece is a 500-ton stone fireplace. The biggest log hotel of all, however, is Le Château Montebello, which rose in 1930 along the Ottawa River in Quebec. Star-shaped, with a cathedral-like rotunda, it was built with 10,000 cedar logs shipped from British Columbia, the tips of each outside log painted red like fingernails.

Meanwhile, across the United States, the National Park Service adopted logs to build many of its facilities. As housing, though, the log cabin remained a quaint artifact. By the 1920s, a few companies were turning out precut kits. But for most people the log cabin was, as Weslager writes, "a sort of historic relic, an oddity like the flintlock rifle, powder horn, or the spinning wheel."

In the 1930s, a number of log cabins were built around the country, in local styles, by the men of the Civilian Conservation Corps. Not only are many of them still standing, but they are available for rent by

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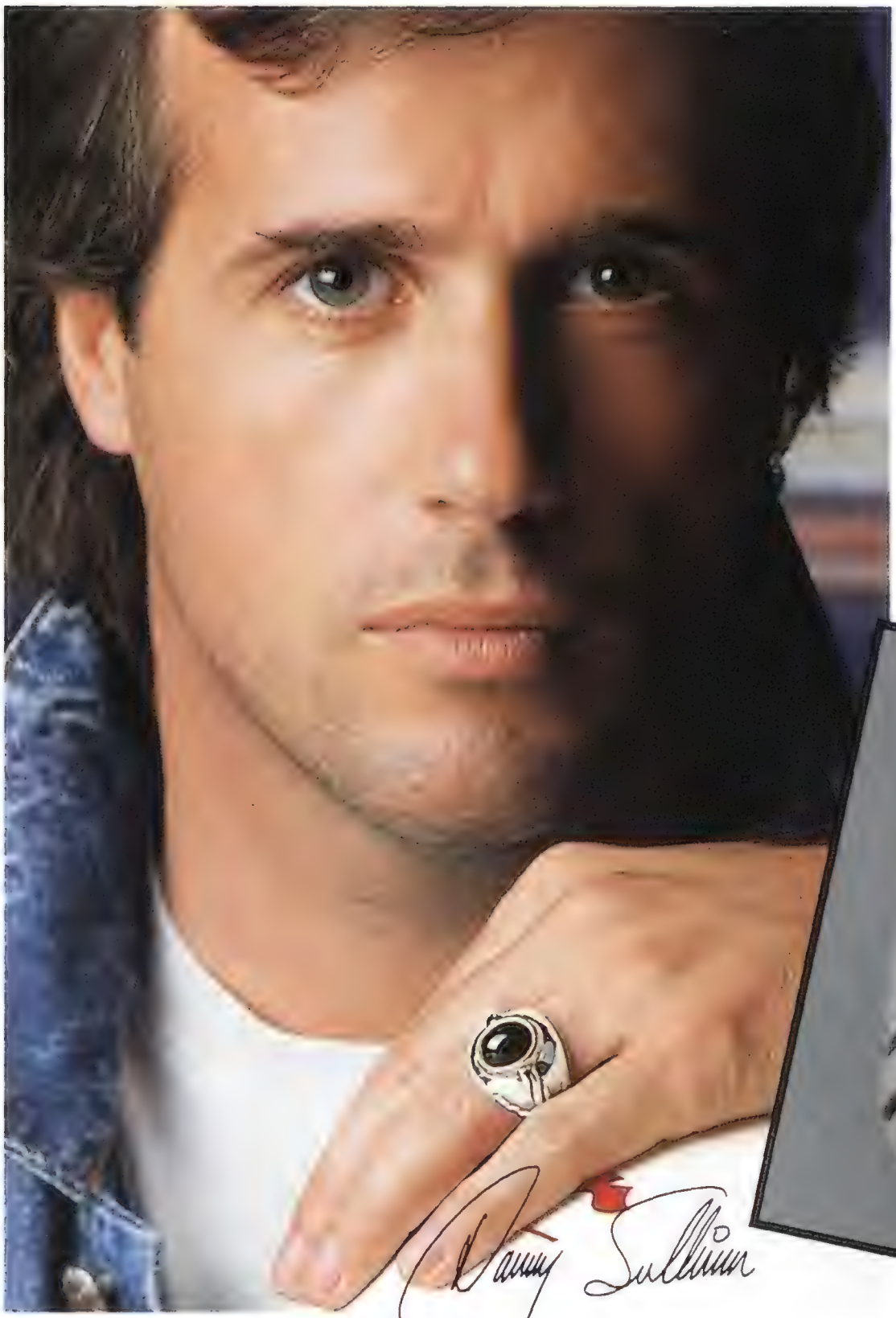

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By the time Durant built Camp Sagamore in 1890s, the main lodge had no log walls—it just looked that way.

those of us who might like to escape from civilization for a night or two. Along with log pavilions, lodges, bridges and other structures, they grace many of our state parks. Myakka River State Park in Sarasota, Florida, for example, has five CCC palm-log cabins, their back porches looking out across 29,000 acres of protected wetlands, prairie and woods, a bird-watcher's paradise. Up north, with the first big snowfall, cross-country skiers pile into the 11 sturdy chestnut cabins at New Germany State Park in western Maryland.

Bill Martin, who lives in Grantsville, Maryland, remembers when the New Germany cabins were built. His father was a supervisor at the CCC camp there, and he was 8 when they were begun. "The local stonemasons and carpenters supervised the CCC men," says Martin today. "A couple of carpenters would get together and say, 'OK, we'll have two bedrooms in this cabin,' and they'd sketch it out in the dirt. That was the plan. Then they'd say, 'OK, we'll need sixteen 30-foot logs today.' The head of the local sawmill was also a foreman in the camp. So they'd send their order to the woods crew—the logs would be cut, taken to the sawmill in trucks, sawed and driven to the site. Each cabin took a month to six weeks to build, then they'd start another one." Martin takes his family back every summer for a week. "I'd go there and live if I could," he says, "in Cabin No. 7."

Today, log cabins are sought out much more than they were in the earlier part of the century. The back-to-the-earth movement of the 1960s contributed, as did the energy crises of the '70s, which brought breakthroughs in caulkings and sealants. By the 1980s, log cabins were an industry. Its lobby, the Log Homes Council in Washington, D.C., encourages industry-wide standards and less restrictive building codes. Building inspectors have often been stumped by logs. There are no load-bearing charts, for instance, for dead but still standing Engelmann spruce. And logs do have their flaws. They twist and shrink and can make great hotels for insects. Pitch pockets, found most often in green spruce, can explode, causing consternation at the dining room table if supper is in session.

The industry's "spike year" was 1987, with 25,000 log homes, or almost 1 percent of America's new houses. Yet a nagging question about "authenticity" persists. Are uniformly milled logs, with splines and kerfs and homogenized notches, the kind found in the majority of precut kits, truly *logs*?

Peter Gott, a log cabin maker in North Carolina, thinks not. Gott says the original shape, contour and texture of a tree are what lend a log character. He finds many of the kits "uninteresting. They have a factory look." Gott doesn't like the way some of the joints fit, either. And Gott knows joints. Since dropping out of Cornell in 1959 and building his own Appalachian-style cabin by hand, Gott has made nearly a hundred log cabins, barns, even chinkless saunas. A pragmatic purist, these days Gott owns nine chain saws and can cut half-dovetails within one thirty-second of his scribe, and he still hews his logs with a broadax. Apparently, Gott's opinion is shared by a lot of people. John Leeper, editor of *Log Home Guide*, a quarterly magazine, says that right now handcrafted homes are gaining on kits in popularity.

Whatever its degree of authenticity, the log cabin seems to be here to stay. In my village in northern Vermont, the real thing seems to be springing up everywhere: precut kits, crafted homes, even one in so-called "Missouri Style," with its broad seams of chinking cracking in the severe cold. Sandy Bowman, a social worker who acted as her own contractor, glances around her cedar cabin the afternoon I visit and says, "Every time I come in here and look up, I'm pleased." Her builder, a fellow named George Reed, "visibly shudders when you mention the word 'two-by-four,'" Bowman confides to me.

I find Reed in Reed's Guns & Ammo. All logs, of course. White cedar, 40 by 80 feet, erected in 31 days in 1989. Leaning on a gun case in this kingdom of rifles and animal heads, Reed tells me how hunters come in, loiter, don't want to leave. "It's the logs," he says, matter-of-factly. "They have a warmth you can't put your hand on."

To provide a home for her old stove, Sandy Bowman designed this cabin. Her new husband, Al, loves it.

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Under gaze of a windblown Eugene O'Neill, student playwright Tom Szentgyorgyi meets in Blue Gene's, the Conference hangout, with his dramaturge, August Wilson, who advises him and acts as sounding board.

By William Severini Kowinski

The play looks good on paper– but will it fly?

Each summer, directors, actors and other pros come to the O'Neill Center for one purpose: to help writers get their scripts off the ground

In 1979, an unknown playwright received a brochure from a friend that described the National Playwrights Conference, a monthlong summer residency at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut. Scrawled on the brochure was the friend's instruction: "Do This!"

So he sent in a stage play and a play for television (the two Conference categories) before the annual December 1 deadline, along with his stamped, self-addressed envelope. There were at least a thousand others trying for perhaps 15 slots. Those 15 playwrights would get to work on their plays with the help of some of the best actors, directors and other professionals in American theater. His self-addressed envelope came back with bad news.

The next year, he sent another two scripts. This time he got a form letter from Lloyd Richards, the Conference's artistic director, encouraging him to keep

writing. So the year after that, he wrote the best play he could and sent it in. Back came his self-addressed envelope, and without even opening it he threw it across the room. Later he got up the nerve to open it and discovered that he was a finalist. Soon he got the telegram inviting him to spend July on a rambling farm caressed by the smell of the sea. "Nothing I've experienced in the theater quite matches the excitement of receiving that telegram," he says. "I guess what it said was, yes, you can be a playwright." It changed his life, and American theater.

One of many Conference legends

The playwright was August Wilson, and the play he worked on at that summer's Conference was *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, which made it to Broadway. The next December he again sent in a play; it got him back to the Conference again. Titled *Fences*, it won Wilson the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for drama. In subsequent years he returned to the O'Neill to work on *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* and *The Piano Lesson*, which won the 1990 Pulitzer.

This is one of the more recent Playwrights Conference legends but hardly the only one: O'Neill Center plays and playwrights have energized international theater for more than a quarter-century, winning several Pulitzers as well as Oscars, Emmys, Tonys, Obies and even a Nobel Prize in Literature. Among the prominent playwrights the O'Neill has nourished are John Guare (author of *Six Degrees of Separation*), Wendy Wasserstein (*The Heidi Chronicles*), David Henry Hwang (*M. Butterfly*), Christopher Durang (*Sister Mary Ignatius Explains It All For You*), Lanford Wilson (*Burn This*), Charles Fuller (*A Soldier's Play*), Lee Blessing (*A Walk in the Woods*) and John Patrick Shanley (who wrote the screenplay for *Moonstruck*). Some of the actors who have participated in this protean enterprise are Michael Douglas, Meryl Streep, Charles Dutton, Al Pacino and Kevin Kline.

Although many theater institutions now develop and showcase new plays (notably the Actors Theatre of Louisville), the O'Neill pioneered the practice. For playwrights it is a trial by paradise in a four-week Eden, a working idyll where they are privileged and condemned to create in a state of grace-under-pressure. How all this works is the O'Neill Conference's mystique. Its history and prominence, its physical environment, its process and something that might be called its ethic are the elements that make it an indispensable asset to American theater.

It started with an idea hatched in the early 1960s by George C. White, a young story editor of the classic TV series *East Side, West Side*. As a boy growing up in Waterford, White had played in the barn on what was the Hammond estate, which overlooked Long Island Sound. When White learned that the abandoned buildings on the property were about to be destroyed, it occurred to him to save the place and dedicate it to theater, naming it in honor of Eugene O'Neill. O'Neill, arguably America's first great playwright, had grown up a few miles away in a house called the Monte Cristo Cottage. It is now owned by the O'Neill Center and open to the public. O'Neill alluded to the Hammond estate in one of his plays, *A Moon for the Misbegotten*, despite the owner's habit (so local legend holds) of chasing young Eugene and his friends away from the grounds with a shotgun.

After enlisting the cooperation of the town of Waterford, owner of the property, White convened the first Conference on the estate in 1965. Theater professionals and young playwrights came, many of them associated with Manhattan coffeehouses and the embryonic Off Off Broadway movement. Among them was Edward Albee, then the only new voice in a generation to

Scripts on hand, actors Jane Adams and Joe Urla, who play the lead roles in Tom's play, rehearse a scene.

Photographs by Bill Ray

In a scene familiar to students anywhere, Tom sits at his desk (above) amid instant coffee, Coke and whiteout, staring at his typewriter and wondering if his play is ever going to come together. His long rewriting stints are broken by a read-through of the play (right) and rehearsals in the Theater Barn, which Tom often watches from the back (far right).

break Broadway's stranglehold on American theater.

It was a tumultuous four days. "A lot of angry playwrights wanted to be heard, wanted in," recalls one of them, Frank Gagliano, who drove up from Manhattan with unknowns Lanford Wilson and Sam Shepard. Discussions under the trees turned into shouting matches; the 22-year-old Shepard made an impassioned speech and stormed off. But the others (including John Guare and Israel Horovitz) began talking about what they could do, and giving new plays a start was the consensus. At the Conference's end, an act of *A Moon for the Misbegotten* was performed in the old barn; it was directed by Jose Quintero, champion of the ongoing revival of Eugene O'Neill's plays. A few years later, his direction of this play would electrify New York.

The next two summers made the O'Neill Conference's own reputation, yet ironically almost ended its existence. So many of those angry playwrights who returned had subsequent successes in New York that an article in the *New York Times* dubbed the O'Neill "Tryout Town, USA." But the elaborate productions were exhausting the participants and fostering rivalries. White turned to Lloyd Richards, the director of Lorraine Hansberry's 1959 Broadway hit, *A Raisin in the Sun*. Although Richards had directed one of those elaborate productions at the O'Neill (complete with simulated bombs and rifle fire), he immediately stripped the Conference down to essentials, "to focus it on its original intent," as Richards says today, "which is to serve the playwright and serve the theater by developing these playwrights." White and Richards have guided the O'Neill in that direction ever since.

"Every day is a week." This is the repeated refrain, the Conference mantra. Everyone uses it to describe not only the intense four-day rehearsal period for each play but the O'Neill experience itself.

Take, for example, the progress of *Dinosaur Dreams* in the most recent session—summer 1991. On a golden Monday morning, the first day of July, Tom Szentgyorgyi, author of *Dinosaur Dreams*, rides in the blue O'Neill van down a curving two-lane road. Through the lush trees, the blue-and-gold sign announcing the O'Neill Center appears. Along with his fellow 1991 playwrights—a couple of whom are with him in the van—he will split his time for the next month between rented dormitories a few miles away, where the living conditions are somewhere between collegiate and penal (one dorm has been known for years as "the Slammer"), and this isolated collection of frame buildings overlooking the sound.

First, Tom and the others get a fast tour. The red barn, now refurbished and air-conditioned, is the indoor performance space. It's named after two early O'Neill Conference supporters, Rufus Rose (the puppetmaster of Howdy Doody and a mentor of the Muppets' Jim Henson) and his wife Margo. Next to the barn is the outdoor amphitheater, a shadeless suggestion of ancient Greece, though the ship's mast serving as a lighting tower gives it a New England touch.

Some of their plays will also be performed at the Instant Theater, a small platform surrounded by bleachers nestled under an enormous beech tree. It was here that Lee Blessing's *A Walk in the Woods*, the now famous play concerning conversations under the

trees between a Soviet and an American arms negotiator, was first performed on July 4, 1986.

As soon as all the playwrights arrive, the work begins. Dressed casually, they gather in a mostly bare room at one end of the production cottage, a long frame building of offices that has the feel of an elongated caboose. Seated in folding chairs or sprawled on the floor, they listen to one another reading their own plays. The first one they hear is *Dinosaur Dreams.*

Before the Conference, Tom was literary manager of the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York. After the Conference he will become the associate artistic director of the Denver Center Theatre Company. He's written a few short theater pieces, but *Dinosaur Dreams*, with its contemporary urban setting and theme, and a mood that mixes comedy and drama, is his first full-length play.

Many of his fellow playwrights have also logged years in theater, but a few of them are here to work in a new form. Phil Bosakowski, Patricia Cobey and Peter Selgin have teleplays, while Gannon Kenney, Matthew Witten, Rick Cleveland, Jeffrey Hatcher, Paul Zimmerman, Charlie Schulman, John Darago and P. J. Barry have stage plays. In age and experience the group ranges from Kenney, a Harvard graduate student, to Barry, a seasoned playwright and actor. Only two have been to the O'Neill before.

The author has previously written about artist William Wegman (September 1991), trolleys (February 1988) and the history of shopping malls (December 1986).

They will read to one another for the next three days. Besides gently starting the process of exposing a written script to scrutiny and transforming it into live theater, this marathon introduces the playwrights to one another through their work. They will need mutual support and understanding for the compressed rigors ahead, so this bonding experience is important. But as he reads his own play, such purposes are lost on Tom.

The jangle of a schoolteacher's bell heralds the dinner break. Meals are cafeteria-style at the 19th-century frame house known as the Mansion; the favorite eating spot is the sea porch, with a view down the sloping meadow to the sand dunes, the swirls of green and yellow marsh grass, and beyond to the white beach and steady blue of the sound. Tom's first dinner is a working one—he confers with his dramaturge, August Wilson. The duty of the dramaturge is to assist the playwright in his craft. In addition to theater critics like the *New Yorker*'s Edith Oliver, O'Neill dramaturges include other playwrights—at this session, Corinne Jacker and August Wilson.

August talks to Tom about the theme of his play as expressed in his synopsis—personal consequences of

economic retrenchment in the 1990s—and questions how this theme is carried out. "I think I can be helpful," he concludes. "There are mistakes that everyone makes. Having made those mistakes, I can point them out. You can stay up all night long and read your play over and over again, and you won't see these things until someone points them out to you."

"Initially I was pretty nervous," Tom says later of his first private meeting with August. "But right away we were talking the right language. Mostly we looked at places in the script where I can relate some of the peripheral action more strongly to the main story—a kind of rhyming."

For the next few days Tom rewrites. He discusses his play with Lloyd Richards (who is famous among playwrights for his concise analyses) and with his director, William Partlan (who coincidentally was August Wilson's first O'Neill director). "I've got to make my play more than a bag of scenes," Tom says at lunch on Tuesday. "How well does each scene advance the plot? I'm going through and following the arc of each character, and rewriting that way."

After missing a few meals, Tom reappears in cutoffs and a sweater on a cool, rainy Wednesday afternoon to again confer with August. Together they spread old and new pages on a round table in the dining hall, and Tom scissors and tapes the script. In particular, Tom has rewritten one major scene. Still, there are two other scenes they agree still have problems. Next Monday, the first test of both problems and solutions will come, when the process moves from the page to the stage.

But there's a special event this first weekend. The visiting Royal Dramatic Theater company from Sweden presents a new play by Swedish author Lars Norén about Eugene O'Neill's last years, with Max von Sydow in a tour de force as the playwright. This international input is a Conference tradition dating back to 1969, when poet Derek Walcott brought his theater company from Trinidad, and to 1970, when West African writer Wole Soyinka came to work on *Madmen and Specialists*, a play he had begun writing with ink he made from coffee grounds while a political prisoner in Nigeria. Soyinka won the 1986 Nobel Prize in Literature.

On Sunday, as fog swirls up around the big beech tree, the members of the 1991 National Playwrights Conference community assemble on the bleachers of the outdoor Instant Theater to hear Lloyd Richards give his traditional welcoming speech. Until now, only the playwrights, directors, dramaturges and designers have been here with the O'Neill's technical and administrative staff. But now the actors have arrived, and everyone is ready to begin in earnest.

Monday, July 7, is the first hot and humid day of the Conference. Tom walks out of the midsummer sunlight and into the dark cavernous barn for the read-through of his play by the actors. He and the others involved in *Dinosaur Dreams* will have only four days to do what normally takes a month ("Every day is a week"). Yesterday the names of his cast were posted on the production cottage bulletin board: stage veterans Anne Pitoniak,

Playwright Corinne Jacker, dramaturge for Gannon Kenney, talks shop with him and director Amy Saltz.

After a rehearsal of Kenney's play, Saltz debriefs with actors Tom McGowan (standing) and Mason Adams.

Victor Raider-Wexler and Phyllis Somerville, as well as seasoned young actors Jane Adams, Joe Urla, Robert Knepper and J. Smith Cameron. Sitting around a couple of tables pushed together on the stage, the cast members read their lines aloud.

After lunch, the actors reassemble and ask questions about their characters. The action of *Dinosaur Dreams* concerns a young couple, Bob and Paula, deciding on marriage in a time of personal and societal uncertainty. Actor Joe Urla, who plays Bob, begins asking about his character in the play's first scene, set in a bar, where Bob tells his friend Mark about Paula.

"Bob describes meeting Paula in very idyllic terms," Urla says. "Is that what really happened?"

"No, he's idealizing her," Tom says. "He's bragging to his friend. But he's being sincere about his feelings for her."

Others talk about Bob's actions and reactions as the play goes on and Paula drifts away from him. Does he understand what is happening around him?

"Bob is socially shallow," Tom says. "He's not aware of the world. But he's not emotionally shallow—he's ready to deal with relationships. That's why he fixates on Paula, and on marrying her as the solution."

The character of Bob's friend Mark, who works on Wall Street, is easier to summarize. "He's a shark," says Bill Partlan. But then the question becomes, what kind of a shark—street-hardened or sophisticated? Throughout the rehearsals, actor Robert Knepper will experiment with Mark's accents and attitudes.

"How does she know these colors?" August Wilson asks, as Paula begins a scene reciting a list of arcane shades to humorously illustrate all the choices for a wedding dress besides white. "Is she an artist?"

"She's a teacher," Tom says. "They're colors in a big crayon box."

"I've taught nursery school," says actress Jane Adams, who is playing Paula between her Broadway appearance in *I Hate Hamlet* and her next assignment. "These are the colors we remember from our crayon boxes, but they aren't the colors kids have now."

The actors read through the play again, and Tom wanders around the stage, listening to the dialogue as it competes with the ringing phone in the box office, stopping to scratch out lines that the actors' gestures and intonations make unnecessary. He pays particular attention to the scene in which Paula introduces Bob to her parents, his major rewrite so far. He's inserted a new event: Paula's father has lost his job, and her mother is upset about it. This carries forward his theme while adding extra drama to the scene. The actors don't know this is a revision, but from now on new pages are color-coded.

As the actors leave, Tom huddles briefly with his director and dramaturge. They agree the new scene works, but the two other scenes that troubled them don't play well. At dinner, Tom ponders the day's lessons. "I have to sort out the questions that pertain to acting—questions that actors would ask even if they were doing Shakespeare—from the questions that pertain to prob-

Informal volleyball game, held each evening, brings everyone together and helps burn off frustrations.

Old barn was reincarnated as the Rufus and Margo Rose Theater Barn, Center's main performance space.

The class of 1991 gathers under the Conference Tree, site of founding playwrights' first meeting in 1965.

lems in the script. I've got a lot of work to do in the next three days. I'm getting tired just thinking about it." After dinner he returns to the dorm to work on changes, a jar of instant coffee stuffed in his backpack.

Tuesday turns out to be Tom's worst day. Bill Partlan begins instructing the actors on when and where to move, the process known as blocking. "Productions are restricted to only what's essential to express the material," Lloyd Richards explains, so there are only simple modular units that stand in for the requisite sofas and park benches; just essential props, no special lighting and no costumes except for clothes the actors supply for themselves. (A designer will draw a rendering of an ideal set after meeting with the playwright; it will be posted for the audience, and it gives the playwright a sense of design needs and possibilities.)

Similarly, actors don't memorize their lines but carry their scripts as they play their roles. Along with the easily altered sets, this allows the playwright to keep making changes up to the moment of performance (which August Wilson, for one, admits he's done). With only four days of rehearsal, Richards points out, the script-in-hand method ensures that "playwrights will hear the lines they wrote, not an approximation."

As the actors begin their first blocking rehearsal, Tom sits in the shadows at one end of the last row of folding chairs. At the other end of the row sits August Wilson, dressed in the same khaki safari outfit he bought for his first Conference in 1982, writing notes on a yellow pad. Bill Partlan watches from closer range in the front row. Tom silently listens to the words he wrote last night—and he doesn't like them. No one else does either, so a frantic night's work is for naught. He scribbles on the script and occasionally gets up and paces behind the seats.

But on Wednesday Tom's mood lifts. His stage manager plays the recorded song that Tom and his director have chosen as background for the first scene, Peter Gabriel's "Sledgehammer." Tom brightens. "I haven't heard *music* in so long!" Today's work on the latter part of the play helps to focus his thoughts on what he needs to change in Paula's final monologue, a pivotal moment. He is relieved that this is his last major rewrite.

Thursday morning they work on the new scene. Instead of talking directly to the audience about her hitchhiking flight from Bob, Paula now reenacts it in cinematic swatches. The director, stage manager and lighting designer discuss the required sound and light changes. Ahead are compressed versions of dress and technical rehearsals. On Friday night, *Dinosaur Dreams* will face its first audience.

Meanwhile, the special life of the O'Neill Conference has gone on. An ad hoc company of actors has rehearsed and read all three teleplays to the community audience. One of the writers, Peter Selgin, has already become a Conference legend for feverishly rewriting his teleplay almost completely, much of it on a broken typewriter, in what seemed like one continuous stint, punctuated by frequent plunges into the ocean. During the Swedish play he was seen, dressed entirely in black, in the on-site café, Blue Gene's, writing alone at a table amid the intermission revelers. He reminded August Wilson of the playwright of a past summer who stayed up for four successive nights rewriting his play, only to sleep through its first performance.

Scouting the premises for new talent

By the end of this second week there are 130 or so people on the premises, including visitors, some of whom are scouting new plays for their New York and regional theaters. But no business is permitted on the grounds, and to protect the playwrights in a vulnerable time the O'Neill Center keeps performance rights to every play for the length of the Conference plus six weeks—after which (unlike many developmental programs) the O'Neill takes no money from any subsequent production.

At night there are group trips to local movie theaters

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Head and heart of the Conference are founder George White (left) and artistic director Lloyd Richards.

and visits to the nearby amusement park, which sometimes supplies unwanted polka music to the O'Neill's outdoor performances. In Blue Gene's, a playwright improvises show tunes on the piano while a staff member sings; and director Clinton Turner Davis takes on all comers in Scrabble while conversation continues on the patio into the night. August Wilson mesmerizes his dinner companions one evening with an account of the conception of his latest play, complete with the characters' voices. Patricia Cobey and Corinne Jacker trade first childhood memories of live theater (Patricia's was sneaking off to matinees at New York's Theatre de Lys; Corinne's was watching Sylvia Sidney carry her curtain-call roses in Chicago). And at rehearsals, meals and every performance, there is Edith Oliver, who after 20 summers as a dramaturge is so beloved at the O'Neill that her oil portrait hangs in the Mansion living room.

On Thursday night, Tom tries to relax. After dinner, he joins the pickup volleyball game near the Instant Theater. But tonight the game is serious, kicking up dust in the bright sunset. When the players quit early as the Instant Theater is prepared for a performance, Tom is not sorry.

Since everyone in the community attends every play, Tom puts aside concerns of his own to watch Gannon Kenney's *Weller*, a short two-character drama with Mason Adams (of *Lou Grant* fame) and Tom McGowan (fresh from his Tony-nominated role in *La Bête*). It is a spectacular evening, the clouds packed in pink and reflecting purple in the sea. As the audience gathers in the deepening blue twilight, Gannon sits high in the corner of the top row of bleachers—"Ready to jump!" he shouts to someone. He has rewritten half his play, as can be seen from the pink and yellow pages among the white in the scripts the actors carry. It's well received, both comforting and daunting to the playwrights yet to be performed.

Friday night is Tom's turn. At the barn door most O'Neill people head to the balcony, leaving the first-floor folding chairs for paying customers. Tom escorts his visiting parents to seats in the back row center, but he ends up watching while pacing back and forth out near the entrance.

Before the play, Lloyd Richards gives his ritual speech explaining the O'Neill process in its historical context and what the audience should expect. "Without new playwrights," he says, "theater is a museum. From the 1,500 plays submitted this year, we have chosen 12—not because they are ready for Off Broadway, but because we spotted a unique voice."

The play progresses without a hitch. The audience laughs at some of the right places and doesn't at others. With its new scenes, the play now runs an hour and 45 minutes, but there is no natural place for a break, so the audience, as expected, seems a little groggy at the end. Still, it didn't take long for them to forget that the stage is mostly bare and that the actors carry scripts. The alchemy of theater works fast.

Afterward, Tom takes his family to Blue Gene's, where the program of his play is tacked up over the bar, honoring it along with the others performed so far. In a couple of days the community will gather again for a critique of his play, but already, over drinks in the paneled interior and out on the patio, the talk has begun, mixing discussion of dramatic points with resonances of personal experience. "I know what Bob was trying to do by marrying Paula—I tried it, and it doesn't work." "I know that guy Mark—I've dated him!"

The author finally sits down to watch

The next afternoon there is another performance of *Dinosaur Dreams*. Playwrights have been known to make script changes at this point, but Tom doesn't. There are two differences, however: Robert Knepper's Mark seemed too aggressive on Friday, so he plays him with a smoother slyness on Saturday. And at this performance, the author actually sits down to watch—at least part of the time. "I see the wisdom of having two performances," he comments later. "I was totally at sea the first night. Going through it again I could actually listen to the audience."

For Tom, the play development process is over, but the lessons of it aren't. "There are still problems," he concludes, "but I'm ending up with a much better play

than I came here with." "The performance is just one part of the process, and not necessarily the most important part," Bill Partlan points out. "The playwright might learn more from the actors' first reading." "The actors ask the playwright questions about their characters," says August Wilson. "Long after the performance, when you're at home rewriting, you'll hear those questions in your head."

After two more weeks of plays, critiques, volleyball games and a crushing heat wave, the 1991 Conference ends, but the Center's work continues. Under George White's leadership, the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center carries on year-round: the National Theater Institute for college students during the school year; summer programs for professionals in puppetry, musical theater and cabaret; programs for Connecticut schools.

Like many arts programs today, the Playwrights Conference is facing funding problems. Because of a recent erosion in support from the National Endowment for the Arts and other sponsors, the spring pre-Conference meeting, when the plays are read, was tacked onto the beginning of the summer session. Staff may have to be cut this summer if the situation doesn't improve.

While White worries about money and manages the O'Neill's external affairs, Lloyd Richards presides as the Zen master of internal workings of the Playwrights Conference. "My responsibility essentially is to create an environment where chances can be taken, where failure is not a stigma but a step toward growth," he says. Richards recently retired as dean of the Yale School of Drama and artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theatre after 12 years, but he intends to stay with the O'Neill. He'll be back this coming July.

Many of last season's participants are hoping to be back as well. August Wilson is among them—this time he hopes to attend as a playwright again. Meeting the O'Neill deadline has become part of his inspiration. "I generally start in October or November," he says, sipping coffee on Blue Gene's patio. "I have this ritual of finishing the play on December 1, going to the coffeeshop and making copies, and making it to the mailbox at like 11:30, buying these one-dollar Eugene O'Neill stamps and pasting them all over the envelope, and dropping it in the mailbox."

Student playwright Rick Cleveland studies his play on the shoreline rocks at the Eugene O'Neill Center. Says Cleveland: "It's like a wildlife refuge for playwrights, who are sort of an endangered species."

Victorious Dewey was briefly famous—as possible Presidential candidate and an icon on cigar boxes.

By Ralph Graves

When a victory *really* gave us a new world order

After the Navy's all but bloodless Battle of Manila Bay in 1898, Uncle Sam became, for good or ill, an international power

Not every cliché is true.

For a year we enjoyed the cliché that Desert Storm was the quickest, most successful and least costly battle in American history. The land battle for Kuwait lasted only 100 hours. Only 85 American military lost their lives. Our commanding general became an instant hero.

But there is a much quicker, cheaper and more resounding battle in our history: the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1, 1898. The action lasted three hours. Not a single American was killed by enemy fire. Only eight Americans were even wounded, none seriously. An entire Spanish fleet was destroyed. In Manila a minuscule fleet was fighting in a country then of little importance, but the victory made America a world power overnight. Commodore George Dewey became an even greater national hero than Norman Schwartzkopf. Dewey buttons flashed on lapels from coast to coast. All sorts of people wanted to run him for President.

The launching of American colonialism

As to the consequences, it is too early to tell about the Gulf War. But the consequences of Manila Bay were enormous and long-lasting. We gained a whole new country at a single stroke. For half a century until the end of World War II, we all but owned the Philippine Islands. Only last year, after the eruption of Mount Pinatubo, did we finally abandon Clark Air Base, and Philippine nationalist sentiment has just forced us to agree to quit the naval base at Subic Bay this year. The 93-year story of American colonialism, set in motion by Dewey's victory, is coming to an end.

Until the spring of 1898, the Philippines had been part of Spain's sprawling empire for 300 years. Aside from converting Filipinos to Catholicism and building the great defensive Walled City in Manila, the Spanish accomplished little. The 7,107 islands had lush tropical fruits and vegetation, great hardwood forests, endless rice paddies and banana groves, but not the spices and gold and silver the Spanish hoped for. (What gold there was got mined later, under the Americans.) For Spain the most profitable use of the Philippines was as a base for trade with China. Each year a single Spanish galleon sailed back to Mexico, laden with Chinese silks, porcelains and other treasures.

At the close of the 19th century the Philippines seemed a rather minor prize. Most Americans, including President William McKinley, did not even know where they were. The only people who really wanted to take them away from Spain were the local freedom fighters of the time, Filipino rebels ably led by a young self-designated general, Emilio Aguinaldo.

However, the Spanish also ruled Cuba, just 90 miles off the Florida coast, and this was anathema to a small band of jingoistic Americans inside and outside our government. Americans had talked of taking over Cuba for decades. Now they saw a chance to free the island and further U.S. interests by waging a quick war against Spain. Quite aside from the moral virtues of Cuban independence, they were convinced that a free Cuba would be much better for business. President McKinley was emphatically not a member of this band. His bumptious young Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Theodore Roosevelt, emphatically was, and among Roosevelt's friends there happened to be an obscure

UNCLE SAM'S

LATEST GREATEST SHORTEST WAR

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SUPERBLY ILLUSTRATED BY PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS FROM LESLIE'S WEEKLY

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Bellicose magazine cover, with Dewey's fleet in line behind hat-waving Uncle Sam, celebrated our "greatest" and "shortest" war. Three-year fight with Filipino forces had yet to come.

60-year-old naval officer, Commodore George Dewey.

Dewey had served with Farragut during the Civil War but had seen no serious action since. He spent years in charge of the nation's lighthouses, and his current post was president of the Navy's Board of Inspection and Survey. He was energetic and competent but remarkably vain. He wore spiffy clothes and a glorious handlebar mustache. As an officer of independent means, he often went horseback riding with Roosevelt in the capital's Rock Creek Park and he was a fellow member of Washington's prestigious Metropolitan Club. Even his biographer Ronald Spector is forced to admit Dewey's lack of distinction: "He had devised no new weapons, planned no great campaigns, written no important pieces, explored no uncharted seas, and contributed no new strategic insights to the navy." But Teddy liked him.

While vigorously building up the Navy and promoting war with Spain, Roosevelt schemed to find an appropriate post for his friend. The opportunity came in October 1897, six months before war began, when Secretary of the Navy John Long was away from Washington. Exercising the wily gumption that would later become the trademark of his Presidency, Teddy, with the help of a Senator from Dewey's home state of Vermont, slipped through President McKinley the appointment of George Dewey to command America's Asiatic Squadron.

Teddy Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, reads news of the war that he helped bring about.

When Secretary Long returned to Washington, he was so furious at the sneaky promotion that he refused to grant Dewey the rank of acting rear admiral. By Congressional law the Navy was entitled to only six admirals, all of them rear, but the commander of the Asiatic Squadron was traditionally made a rear admiral so that he could hold his own with the other commanders of foreign fleets in the Far East. His precious vanity wounded, Dewey would be compelled to fly only a commodore's pennant with a single star instead of the two stars of a rear admiral's flag. He was not consoled by a friend's reminder that the only American naval officer ever to make a name for himself in the Pacific was also a commodore—Matthew Perry, who in 1854 had opened Japan to the outside world.

After the mysterious sinking of the *Maine* in Havana Harbor on February 25, 1897, Roosevelt cabled Dewey in Hong Kong: "Keep full of coal. In the event of declaration of war with Spain, your duty will be to see that the Spanish Squadron does not leave the Asiatic coast and then offensive operations in Philippine Islands."

Congress declared war on April 23. An order went out to Dewey: "Proceed at once to Philippines. Commence operations against the Spanish Squadron. You must capture or destroy. Use utmost endeavors." Even with utmost endeavors, this was a tall order. Dewey's fleet consisted of four cruisers and two gunboats. Despite attempts to replenish, they had only half of their full capacity of ammunition and were 7,000 miles from home.

Piecing together knowledge of enemy strengths

Dewey had never seen the Philippines and had little idea of enemy strengths, but between reports from foreign visitors and last-minute information from the U.S. consul in Manila, it was possible to piece together a good bit of knowledge. The Spanish fleet in Manila Bay consisted of seven fighting ships, one more than Dewey's. The entrance to the bay was guarded by three islands fortified with 17 rifled guns. The two channels were reported to be mined. Even if Dewey's squadron managed to get past the island forts and mines, the Spanish ships inside the bay were backed up by 37 shore batteries. When foreign naval officers in Hong Kong learned about Dewey's new mission,

Wreck of battleship *Maine* shows above surface of Havana Harbor.

Sinking of the *Maine* was blamed on Spain—and pictures like this helped bring on war—but the cause of the explosion was never clear.

they thought he was headed for certain destruction and drank farewell toasts to the doomed Americans.

What no one knew was the state of the Spanish defenses. As with Desert Storm, the strength of the enemy was generously overestimated.

As war approached, the Spanish admiral, Don Patricio Montojo, begged Madrid for more arms, more supplies, more mines. They were never sent. But the great mismatch lay in firepower. Dewey's fleet had 53 guns larger than 4-inchers; Montojo had only 31. More important, Dewey had ten grand 8-inch guns while Montojo had none. The difference in range and destructive power would give the American fleet an overwhelming advantage. It would have taken far more imagination than Dewey possessed to lose this battle.

All the way to the Philippines on his flagship, the cruiser *Olympia*, commanded by Capt. Charles Gridley, Dewey drilled his crews in gunnery procedures. He built barricades of canvas and iron to shield the gun crews. He protected the sides of his ships and the ammunition hoists with heavy sheet chain. As a precaution against fire, he threw overboard all unnecessary woodwork, including mess tables. Not from *Olympia*, of course, where the commodore preserved all his creature comforts. The one thing he could not afford to do was shoot off a lot of practice ammunition. He was convinced he would need every shell.

On the evening of April 30 the American squadron arrived outside Manila Bay. There was no sign of the Spanish fleet, but Dewey thought he had been spotted. Since he had his orders to undertake "offensive operations," that was what he determined to do, and the sooner the better. He would try to enter the bay in the middle of the night. If he got past the fortified islands and the mines, he would give battle at dawn with whatever ships survived the midnight passage.

Manila Bay is huge, almost 30 miles across. The entrance to it is divided into two channels by the islands of Corregidor and Caballo. The northern channel of Boca Chica, or "Little Mouth," is two miles wide. The southern channel, Boca Grande, is reduced to a usable width of three miles by the small island of El Fraile. All three islands had heavy guns.

Dewey chose Boca Grande, and he made one enormous assumption. He figured that in the tropical waters the mines would have deteriorated rapidly and that their number was probably exaggerated. His conclusion: danger from mines was "negligible." This was either a brilliant insight or a stroke of fantastic luck because he was right. When one of his officers suggested that a supply ship lead the way through the channel to set off any mines, Dewey replied, "I have waited 60 years for this opportunity. Mines or no mines, I am leading the squadron in myself."

In the dead of night, with the *Olympia* leading the way, Dewey's ships approached the islands, and every-

In Manila Bay, Spain's Adm. Patricio Montojo had a decrepit fleet and dramatically inferior guns.

An 1898 lithograph shows the hapless Spanish fleet and Dewey's battle line pounding it from 2,000 yards.

one braced for the sight of bright flashes of gunfire. As Dewey said later, the island guns could have delivered "a telling fire" if the gunners had been "enterprising and watchful." They weren't. The Spanish gunners were asleep at their lanyards. At ten minutes after midnight on the morning of May 1, when half the ships in line had passed the fortifications, the El Fraile battery finally opened fire. It fired only four times. The batteries on Corregidor and Caballo never fired at all because, it was explained later, no one gave the order. Without suffering any damage whatsoever, the Asiatic Squadron was inside the vast bay.

Dewey slowed his fleet to a crawl and waited for dawn. He also made two further assumptions, one right, one wrong. He did not think the Spanish would attack at night, so he proposed to wait for daylight. And he expected the Spanish ships to line up in front of the city of Manila, where they would have the full support of their shore batteries. The word was passed: the men were permitted to sleep at their guns. They were disciplined, well-trained men, but it seems unlikely that they got much sleep that night.

At 4 A.M. the mess boys moved around the decks in the darkness, serving coffee.

At first light at 5 A.M. the shore batteries opened fire, but the range was too great. No hits. Dewey's squadron picked up speed and moved across the front of the low-lying city. The shore batteries continued to fire, but again there were no hits. Dewey was saving his ammunition for the Spanish fleet, but it was nowhere to be seen.

Admiral Montojo, fearing the city would be destroyed by gunfire if the battle took place directly in front of it, had moved his ships to Cavite at the southern end of the bay. He later claimed another advantage for this position: the waters off Cavite were so shallow (7 to 26 feet) that if his ships were sunk, his men might save themselves by climbing the masts or swimming ashore. Cavite had shore batteries, too, but fewer guns than at Manila. Montojo would miss those guns.

At broad daylight—early in the tropics—Dewey found the enemy. He closed up his ships to 200-yard intervals and, in single file, led them toward battle. His flagship *Olympia* was first, followed by the *Baltimore*, the *Raleigh*, the *Petrel*, the *Concord* and the *Boston*.

Spanish admiral anchored in shallow water, he said, so if the fleet sank, crews could take refuge in rigging.

Charles Gridley, captain of the *Olympia*, is famed for Dewey's "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley."

The two fleets were almost equal in number, six against seven, and in manpower, just under 1,800 men each, neither knowing that the American ships had such superior firepower and maneuverability. The Cavite shore batteries and the Spanish ships opened fire, again without effect, and again Dewey held back. He closed to 5,500 yards, the effective range for the big 8-inch guns. At 5:40 A.M. as the *Olympia* steamed broadside to the first Spanish ship, Dewey, standing on the bridge, turned to the *Olympia*'s captain and said the eight words that have lived in American history: "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley." The world would grow to love the courteous nonchalance and the supreme confidence those words suggested.

Gridley fired. So did the port batteries of the other five American ships as each one passed broadside to the enemy fleet. In what Dewey called "the misty haze of the tropical dawn," it was difficult to estimate damage. Not only was there all that smoke from the American guns and engines, but also the smoke from the Spanish guns, both ship and shore batteries.

When the pass was completed from east to west, Dewey swung his ships in a circle and repeated the attack on a parallel course from west to east, still at 5,000 yards. Few Spanish guns could reach Dewey. On this second run, what Spanish fire there was continued inaccurate and slight. After completing four passes, Dewey decided to risk his fifth pass at only 2,000 yards.

Now way in close, the American fire was devastating. But at 7:35, at the end of the run, Gridley told Dewey (mistakenly) that the fleet's 5-inch rapid-fire guns had only 15 rounds apiece left.

Dewey decided to withdraw to check, and redistribute, his supply of ammunition. But as the Americans broke their line of battle, they could see that the Spanish ships were ablaze and no longer returning fire. Feeling confident, Dewey ran up a signal from the *Olympia* to the other ships. It would be his second memorably insouciant command of the day: "Serve the men breakfast." As Dewey later commented, the break-

Ralph Graves last wrote for SMITHSONIAN *on the new edition of* Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. *A former managing editor of* Life, *he's at work on his fifth novel.*

Cartoon of struggle with Filipino independence force was captioned "A bigger job than he thought for."

fast signal in the middle of a major naval battle showed "a nonchalance that had never occurred to me."

Dewey summoned his captains to the *Olympia* for a report. To everyone's complete astonishment, they learned that in spite of all the Spanish fire from ship and shore batteries, no American ship was badly damaged. Each captain had thought that his own ship had had a miraculous escape. Only the *Baltimore*, which had been hit five times, suffered any casualties: two officers and six men wounded, none seriously. Not a single man had been killed. The only really damaging Spanish shell had been a fluke. Entering the *Baltimore*'s starboard side, it had caromed crazily all over the ship and finally disabled a 6-inch gun before exploding a nearby box of ammunition.

It was time to go back to work, but little work remained. One shore battery to be silenced, one small Spanish ship to be polished off. The rest were sunk (indeed, with men climbing the masts to escape), foundered or burning. That afternoon Dewey sent word to the Spanish captain-general that if the American ships were fired on, he would destroy Manila. The captain-general prudently promised not to fire. The *Olympia*'s shipboard band then saluted the enemy by playing "La Paloma" and "other Spanish airs."

When word of the incredible triumph reached the United States, President McKinley at last made Commodore Dewey an admiral.

Dewey had cut the cable to Hong Kong so the Spanish garrison could not send for help, but this was hardly necessary since none was available. Spain's position was hopeless. A Spanish army of 15,000 men was holed up in Manila's Walled City with no way of getting supplies or reinforcement.

Yet the aftermath of Manila Bay was as confused as the Spanish defense and, like Desert Storm, left the victors with world-class problems.

Surrounding Manila were young General Aguinaldo's Filipino freedom fighters. Having long struggled for independence, they were now convinced that once the Spanish garrison was forced to surrender, the Philippines would be a free and independent country. Aguinaldo would steadily insist that, speaking through the U.S. consul general in Singapore in 1898, America had promised this, but the conversation was carried on through an interpreter and the consul general always denied the claim. So did Dewey.

The rebels were in for a surprise: the United States would not grant independence for almost 50 years. Americans were in for a surprise too. With extraordinary skill and courage, Aguinaldo's forces would eventually fight a whole American army to a standstill for three bitter years with terrible losses: 20,000 Filipinos and 4,000 Americans killed, causing far more anguish and bloodshed for the Americans than the Spanish had (SMITHSONIAN, May 1989).

Dewey's victory had handed the United States the Philippine Islands—if we wanted them. But with a Spanish army sitting there behind massive stone walls, an assault force was necessary to finish the job. We sent one across the Pacific in jammed transport ships. It took three months to assemble enough troops, 11,000 in all. They camped in the just-created Camp Dewey between the beach and the rice paddies. They endured heat, insects, dysentery and drenching rains. They also had to endure the appalling stench of dead Spanish sailors decomposing in the warm tropical shallows, the bubbles of gas rising to the surface to explode with a nauseating *plop*.

Everyone wanted a glimpse of Dewey

All through this miserable period of waiting for the Army to come, Admiral Dewey held court aboard the *Olympia*, receiving visitors in the splendid lounge area outside his cabin, seated in a capacious black leather armchair, with Oriental rugs gracing the polished deck. Everybody in Asia came to get a glimpse of him: captains of foreign vessels; consuls and attachés; Filipino dignitaries; countless members of the press, eager to interview the hero of Manila Bay.

Inside Manila, conditions were frightful. The Filipino insurgents cut off the city's main water supply, so that 250,000 inhabitants had to get by on rainwater and polluted wells. Food was also cut off. People ate horses, dogs, cats and rats. Sewage piled up in the streets, spreading disease. The neutral Belgian consul ferried messages back and forth between Dewey, the Army's Gen. Wesley Merritt and Spain's Captain-

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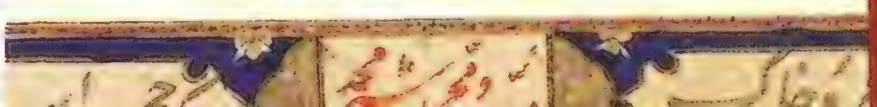


In 1899, hero of the day Dewey got a big parade in New York, was given a jeweled sword from Tiffany's.

General Fermin Jaudenes. The language glowed with chivalrous esteem, and phrases like "Very respectfully" and "Kissing the hands of your excellencies" and "Without prejudice to the high sentiments of honor and duty which your excellency entertains."

What the messages boiled down to was that Jaudenes wanted to surrender a hopeless position, but on two conditions. He wanted a promise that the Filipino insurgents would be kept out of the city, lest they slaughter the garrison along with women and children. And that the city would be formally "attacked" in order to save his own face and the honor of Spain.

They worked it all out. The result was a preposterous charade called the Battle of Manila.

At 9:35 on the morning of August 13, 1898, the *Olympia* and three other American ships would begin a "bombardment" of Fort San Antonio Abad, being careful not to hit the city itself. After this "attack," Jaudenes would raise a white flag at the Walled City, but only after Dewey had flown the international code signal demanding surrender. Dewey even sent Jaudenes a sketch of the signal flags. At 11 o'clock Dewey raised his flags. At 11:20 Jaudenes raised his white flag. The American Army walked into the Walled City, and the Battle of Manila was over. Compared with Dewey's naval battle, American casualties were heavy: six Americans were actually killed, all in random mishaps.

Now what?

This question opened a fierce debate in the United States. Having won the Philippines, should we keep them as a possession, a colony? Give them back to Spain after a suitable peace treaty had freed Cuba? Give the Filipinos their independence? For his part, Dewey, who had at first reported that the Philippines were ready for independence, changed his mind later and testified to the contrary. Behind all this was a deeper philosophical question that has run through American history from before the Mexican War up through the two world wars, through Korea and Vietnam and right down to Desert Storm: How much should Americans involve themselves in foreign lands?

The argument between the imperialists and the anti-imperialists rocked the country. "Where the flag once goes up, it must never come down!" Senator Henry Cabot Lodge thundered. His Senate colleague George Hoar replied that if we kept the Philippines, we would become "a vulgar, commonplace empire founded upon physical force." Strong business interests supported acquisition. President McKinley, a consummate ditherer, took forever to make up his mind before at last deciding to keep the Philippines. The Senate narrowly voted its agreement. America, a breakaway colony itself a little more than a century before, was now a world colonial power—like England, Germany and all those others.

Charles Denby, soon to be one of the commissioners for the Philippines, spoke proudly. "We are taking our proper place among the nations of the world. We are after markets, the greatest markets now existing in the world. Along with these markets will go our beneficent institutions, and humanity will bless us."

Well, yes and no.

Sincerity and idealism were ingredients

A future President, William Howard Taft, was appointed the first civilian governor of the Philippines. With a patronizing but essentially good-hearted phrase, he christened his charges "our little brown brothers." The Americans put up schools and imported a thousand volunteers to teach English to the Filipinos. Roads and bridges and sewage systems were built. Smallpox was eradicated and cholera epidemics were brought under control. America did try to remake the country and to introduce the Filipinos to something like its own democratic system of government, as Stanley Karnow relates in his fine history *In Our Image*. It is possible to argue about the wisdom, and about the ultimate success and failure, of America's role in the Philippines. But there is no doubt of the sincerity and idealism, now mostly forgotten or derided, that went into it.

And what of our hero—the man who had been respon-

sible for opening the door on American colonialism?

Dewey stayed in Manila for a little more than a year after his great victory. He commanded the Asiatic Squadron, had a significant role in the handling of our new colony and contributed what naval support he could to the Army's struggle against Aguinaldo's *insurrectos*. He was very much the Pasha of the Philippines.

His strangest act during this period was his brief correspondence with his former opponent, Adm. Patricio Montojo. It was an exchange of letters worthy in its absurdity of the whole implausible episode. Montojo had been summoned to Madrid to face a court-martial for his hapless defense of the Philippines. He wrote Dewey: "It would be of the greatest utility and of much force if I were able to offer the highly valuable testimony of the authorized opinion of yourself, the distinguished Commander-in-Chief of the squadron which I had the honor of engaging."

Dewey was very good about answering his mail. With fantastic generosity he replied to Montojo: "I have no hesitation in saying to you what I have already had the honor of reporting to my government, that your defense at Cavite was gallant in the extreme. The fighting of your flagship, which was singled out for attack, was especially worthy of a place in the traditions of valor of your nation."

Even so, Montojo was relieved of duty.

In September 1899 Dewey finally returned to New York for a hero's welcome: a Dewey parade, a Dewey medal, Dewey triumphal arches, Dewey flags, a Dewey gold loving cup and "Welcome Dewey!" spelled out in a 36-foot-high electric sign on the Brooklyn Bridge. "It seemed impossible," he said with what could only have been false modesty, "to live up to all that was expected of me as a returning hero."

A grateful Congress voted him a special sword of honor and invented a brand-new lifetime rank for him, the four stars of a full admiral. Happily, the plans to run him for President came to naught.

But he thoroughly enjoyed the ride. And why not?

Future President William Howard Taft served as first governor of the Philippines. Although he weighed 325 pounds, he posed affably on a water buffalo; he referred to Filipinos as "our little brown brothers."

Stunning images from an ailing space telescope

Plagued by errors and glitches, our costly eye in the sky, the Hubble, is nevertheless beaming down a wealth of priceless data

On April 25, 1990, the Hubble was deployed from the space shuttle *Discovery* in an orbit 380 miles high.

Never has a scientific endeavor seemed so ill-fated as the Hubble Space Telescope. A large space telescope was proposed in a RAND Corporation think-tank report back in 1946, but it took 31 years—and some skillful lobbying by scientists—to get a reluctant Congress to provide funds. Then it required $1.5 billion and years of effort by scientists, engineers and technicians to bring the project to completion. Finally, in April 1990, the Hubble was launched into space with, well, astronomical expectations: soaring high above Earth's image-degrading atmosphere, the Hubble would outperform even the largest terrestrial instruments and open broad new avenues of research. But when the photographs began to come back from space, it was evident that something had gone horribly wrong—the pictures were blurred. Through an incredible error, the telescope's 94.5-inch primary mirror had been ground to the wrong shape.

That wasn't the only problem: solar panels that provided power to the spacecraft shook and jerked whenever it orbited from day to night and night to day. Later, two of the gyroscopes that stabilized the Hubble in its orbit malfunctioned. The Hubble, it appeared, had turned out to be an embarrassing and extravagant dud.

But thanks to scientific ingenuity and improvisation, that has not proved to be the case. Other onboard gyroscopes were pressed into service to stabilize the orbiting observatory. Ground controllers scheduled activities around the periods when the solar panels jittered. Most significantly, astronomers and engineers from all over the country conferred about the blurry images. Borrowing and refining some radio-astronomy techniques, they developed a process called "image deconvolution." A computer studies the distorted image of a single star, which is represented by a set of numbers. From that, it deduces equations that can transform the numbers into others that accurately portray an unblurred star. Then the equations are applied to the photograph as a whole to produce a crisp picture like those shown on the following pages.

Today, while many of its functions remain seriously impaired, the telescope is nonetheless deluging astronomers with valuable data. It has examined interstellar gas to pin down the physical conditions surrounding the Big Bang; it has produced surprises, such as globular star clusters (traditionally considered among the oldest structures in the Universe) in the bloom of youth; it has probed the heart of a distant galaxy to find confirmation for the theory that a star-devouring black hole lies at that galaxy's center; it has monitored swirling gas streams in what may be a solar system in formation. Its spectroscopic instruments, which analyze the physical makeup of stars, record ultraviolet light that cannot reach ground-based telescopes. In short, the Hubble is beginning to have a dramatic effect on cosmology, the study of the Universe as a whole.

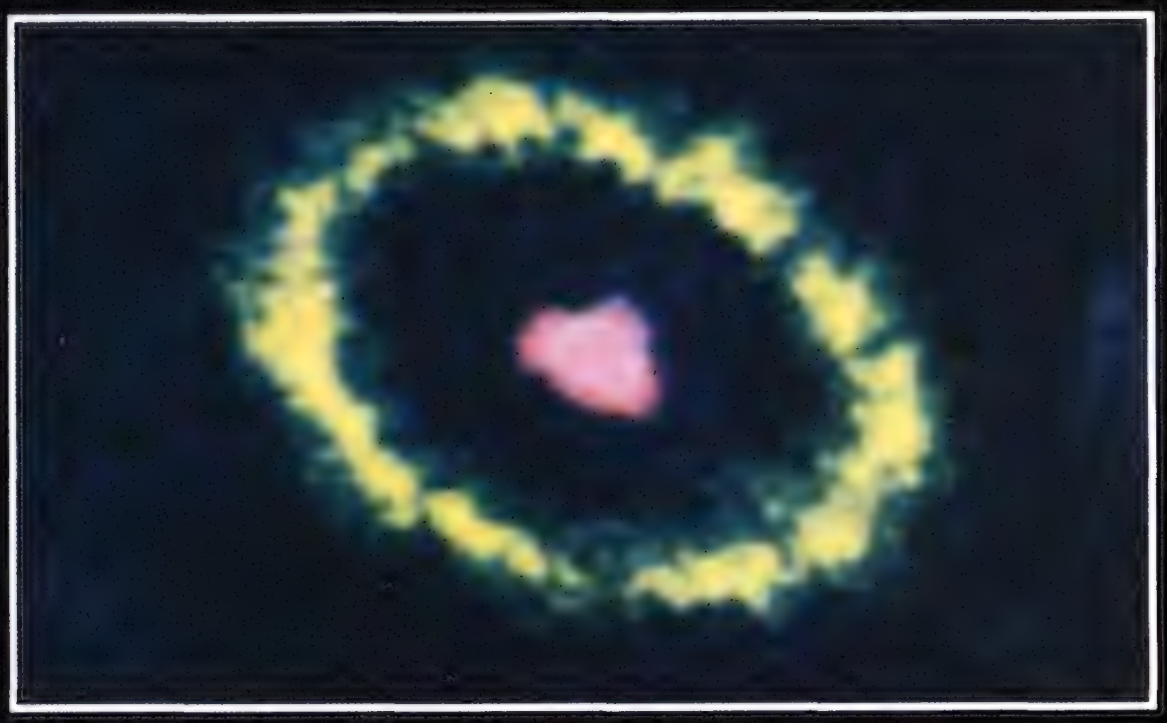
In 1994, astronauts will journey into space to repair the faulty focus. Fitted in effect with a contact lens, the Hubble should then have the full capability that astronomers—and taxpayers—expected.

The Hubble zooms in on the galaxy NGC 1275, at left, shown above as it's seen from Earth. Blue dots are rare globular clusters of young stars, not old ones expected.

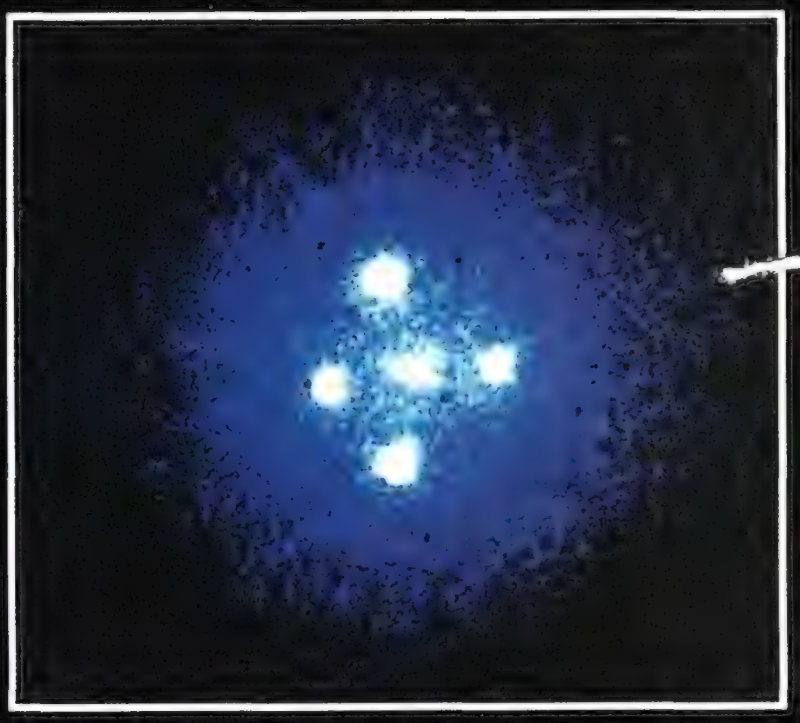
Less familiar to astronomers than Saturn's rings, the scalloped white formation is the so-called Great White Storm, which occurs once every 30 years. Hubble took the best pictures yet of the phenomenon.

Knots and filaments mark shock fronts in the gas ballooning from the massive, unstable star Eta Carinae, which will likely explode as a supernova.

Small box in ground-based telescope image, at left, marks one-light-year-square area of the Orion Nebula; it is detailed in Hubble's wide-field picture, above.



Elliptical ring of gas surrounds the debris (central pink patch) of Supernova 1987A, an exploded star. In a few years the expanding debris will smash into the outer ring, producing celestial fireworks.



In best picture yet of the "Einstein Cross," light bent by gravity of a closer galaxy (center) produces four separate images of a more-distant quasar.

Galaxy M87 may have a black hole at its core. Hot disk of gas falling into black hole produces a plasma jet more than 5,000 light-years long.

This region in the globular star cluster M14, an aggregation of hundreds of thousands of stars, is blurry (left) as seen from Earth. Above, the Hubble picture resolves blobs into distinct stars.

Painting by artist Dana Berry interprets Hubble's spectrograms of the gas-and-dust disk around the star Beta Pictoris. Unusual for a star not in embryonic stage, the disk may be a solar system in the making.

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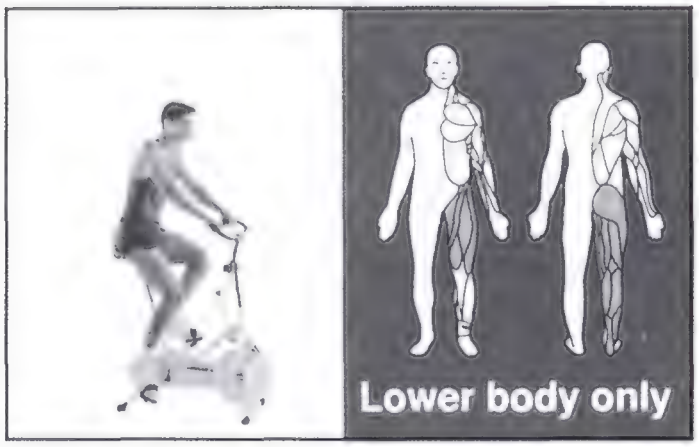

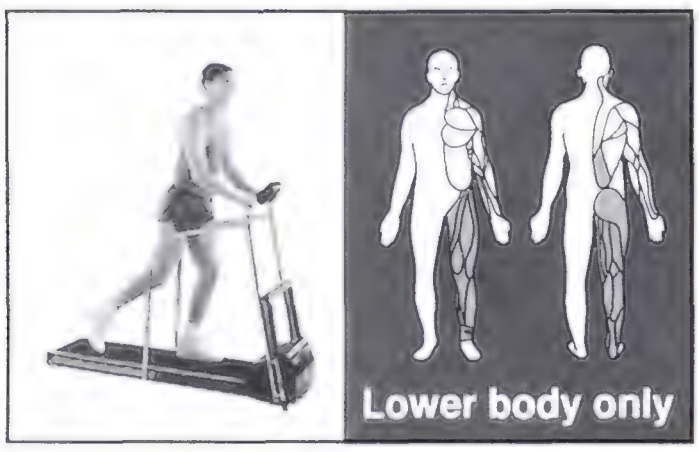

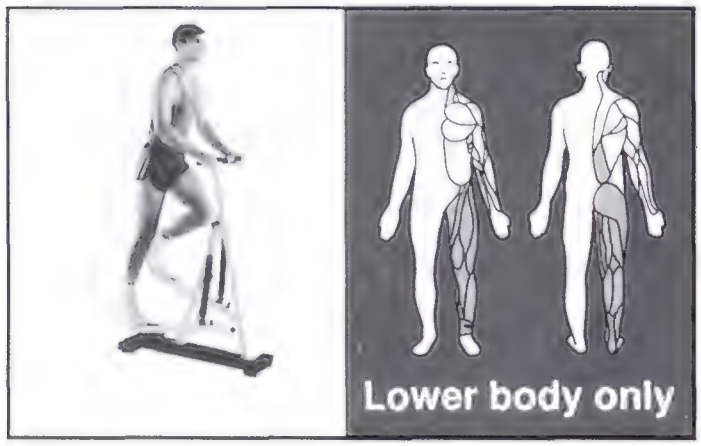

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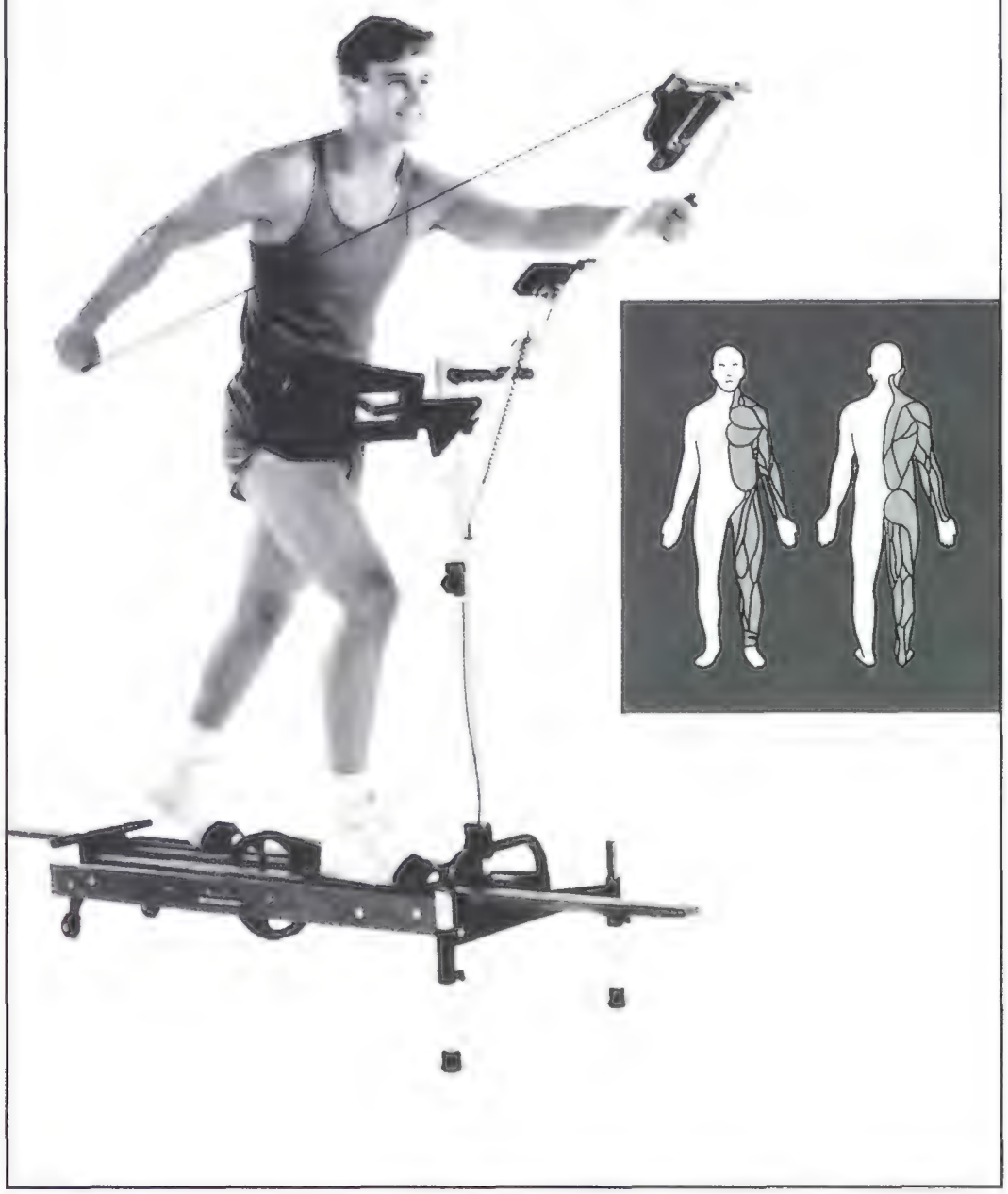

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Equivocal portrait, done in 1890s, provided Bierce with adjacent skull and an air of affluence. Above, in cartoon, he skewers another target.

By Bruce Watson

Who was it wrote the devil's dictionary?

Not Old Nick but a savage satirist named Ambrose Bierce, who disappeared mysteriously in Mexico playing a last role as 'Old Gringo'

There are writers who lead lives of quiet exaltation, passing time simply, penning their adventures. And there are other writers, less imaginative or less acclaimed, who must become their own protagonists searching for a part in some bold, personal saga. Ambrose Bierce—journalist, author, cynic non-pareil—began the last chapter of his life in revolutionary Mexico.

"There is a good deal of fighting going on over on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande," he wrote from Laredo, Texas, in 1913. "But I hold to my intention to go into Mexico if I can. In the character of 'innocent bystander' I ought to be fairly safe."

He was 71 at the time, silver-haired, impeccably groomed, still ramrod straight. Though plagued by asthma, his iron will had kept him strong and fiercely defiant. Twenty years earlier he had been the country's most acerbic critic. A swipe of his pen had squandered reputations, brought death threats, infuriated politicians. But facing the Mexican border he was alone, writing one of the great death scenes in American lore—his own.

"If you hear of my being stood up against a Mexican stone wall and shot to rags, please know that I think that a pretty good way to depart this life. It beats old age, disease, or falling down

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the cellar stairs. To be a Gringo in Mexico—ah, that is euthanasia."

And so "Bitter Bierce" saddled his horse and rode into the territory of Pancho Villa. A few letters later, he passed into rumor. He was never heard from again. No remains, no personal belongings, have ever been found.

To readers of the Gilded Age, Ambrose Bierce was either devil or prophet. Columnist, critic, and author of some of the best war stories ever written, he cast a scathing eye on humanity. His career spanned an era of frantic industrialization from post-Civil War to pre-World War I, and his character—restless, brash and opinionated—embodied the times he lived in. Yet he fought the emerging society to the end, never bowing to popular optimism, never softening his attacks on preachers, politicians and "that immortal ass, the average man." He was the master of invective, a curmudgeon for all seasons. No pen was ever sharper, none more bitter. To wit:

"**Politics, n.** A strife of interests masquerading as a contest of principles. The conduct of public affairs for private advantage."

"**Love, n.** A temporary insanity curable by marriage. . . ."

But if brevity is the soul of wit, sorrow is its heart. Beneath Bierce's crusty shell lay the profound sadness of an impossible ideal betrayed. Unable to endure the human race, he repeatedly fled family and friends in search of a tolerable existence. By the time he vanished he had fought in the Civil War, crossed the plains on horseback, prospected for gold, and carved a channel of protest through an America whose destiny he saw as anything but manifest. The mystery of Ambrose Bierce lies not only in his disappearance but also in his sources—the source of his wit, his anger and his cruel appraisal of the world.

"**Birth, n.** The first and direst of all disasters."

Bruce Watson often contributes the last-page essay; he wrote about Edward Stratemeyer in October 1991.

In 1887 William Randolph Hearst hired Bierce as a columnist for his paper.

He was born Ambrose Gwinett Bierce, the tenth child of a struggling Ohio farmer tilling what, in 1842, was the Western Reserve. He hated the name Ambrose, a name "fit only for the mouths of women—in which it sounds fairly well." Throughout his life he was called simply "Bierce." Not much is known of his childhood. Critics have found only his parents' staunch Calvinism as a source of his vitriol. Laura and Marcus Aurelius Bierce made daily prayer and Bible reading a fixture in their hardscrabble lives, instilling in Ambrose a lifelong hatred of organized religion and yet an unflinching Puritanism. Toward the end of his life, Bierce boasted that no woman had ever seen him naked. He was a Victorian gentleman in an age that shuddered at intimacy and found other worlds to conquer.

His parents he saw as "unwashed savages," but his father, while a poor farmer who "could give me no gen-

eral education . . . had a good library, and to his books I owe all that I have." By the age of 10, Bierce had read Homer. Though he would heap abuse on his contemporaries Twain, Whitman and Henry James, he maintained a deep reverence for the classics.

Bierce left home at 15, worked odd jobs, put in a year at a military academy until, at almost 19, the Civil War offered escape from small-town life. Seven days after the firing on Fort Sumter he enlisted, and within six weeks he saw action on the Virginia border. He fought later at Shiloh and Chickamauga, the latter the title of one of his most famous stories about the folly of war. With his military training and keen intelligence, Bierce became a topographical engineer. He scouted enemy territory, mapped offensives, rose to the rank of lieutenant and was later brevetted as a major. But in the battle of Kennesaw Mountain, a bullet shattered his temple, and he was shipped to a hospital on a flatcar, riding with hundreds of moaning soldiers through a driving rain. He suffered dizzy spells and blackouts for months but returned to fight again. After the injury, however, Bierce's family found him a different man. "Some of the iron of that shell seemed to stick in his brain," his brother Albert said, "and he became bitter and suspicious, especially of his close friends."

In essays and in fiction, Bierce would return to the Civil War again and again. His stories, among the harshest indictments of war in American literature, contain no heroes. Bierce's soldiers rarely die in battle. Instead they are pinned beneath falling buildings, trapped behind enemy lines, executed by rope or by accident with no more glory or pity than is offered by the elements. The Civil War fascinated and appalled Bierce; he found in it a metaphor for his dark vision, and he bore the scars of its savagery for the rest of his life.

Bierce, at left, picnics with student writers whom he generously coached.

Shortly before Appomattox, Bierce became a government confiscator of enemy property in Selma, Alabama. Watching carpetbaggers in action and getting shot at by local snipers, he hardened for another year before going West on a survey expedition.

San Francisco in the 1860s was home to a ragtag collection of drifters and dreamers. From forty-niners who had struck it poor to the lucky few tossing silver dollars into the streets, the city was home to a wealth of characters Bierce would have had to invent if they had not already been his neighbors. Street shootings were common, as were beatings of the Chinese. Gamblers, sailors, grandstanding politicians, millionaires in red-flannel undershirts, all gave San Francisco a flavor that would amuse and appall Bierce his entire life.

A boomtown of more than 60,000, San Francisco had six newspapers and a lot of local talent. Mark Twain was writing for the *Morning Call.* Bret Harte, beginning to publish his stories of the mining camps, was a secretary in the U.S. Mint, where Bierce worked briefly as night watchman. Sierra poet Joaquin Miller was already contributing to journals. And Bierce began doing the same, and he soon broke into print with verses and commentary. By 1868 he was editor of the *News-Letter* and its "Town Crier" columnist.

From the beginning he served notice that he would spare no one. "Somebody has attempted to rob the safe in the office of the City and County Treasurer," the Town Crier wrote. "This is rushing matters; the

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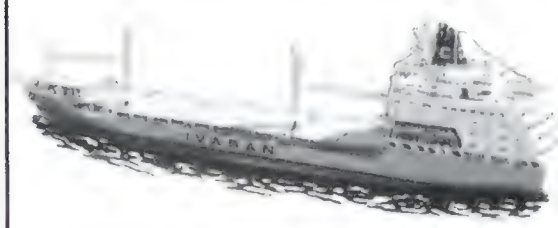

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Long-suffering wife, Mollie, said he was the only man she ever loved.

impatient scoundrel ought to try his hand at being a Supervisor first. From Supervisor to Thief the transition is natural and easy." In another column: "An insurance company was robbed. Tit for tat."

Commenting on the murder of a Chinese woman, he wrote, "she died of galloping Christianity of the malignant California type."

Such irreverence drew quick notice, even from the opposite coast. *The Nation* called the Town Crier the "most irreverential person on the Pacific Coast." Locally Bierce was hailed as "the wickedest man in San Francisco" and was welcomed into the literary salons of Russian Hill. There, despite his gentlemanly manners, he shocked society ladies with his barbarous wit. Of the Town Crier's philosophy he wrote, "We like coarseness and take a singular delight in rich, creamy vulgarity. Downright nastiness is very much in our line, and we would go a long distance round a cornfield to revel in some sort of beastly spectacle."

Clearly he had found a vent for his spleen. With time out for adventures, he would write for San Francisco

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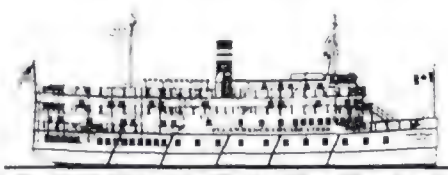

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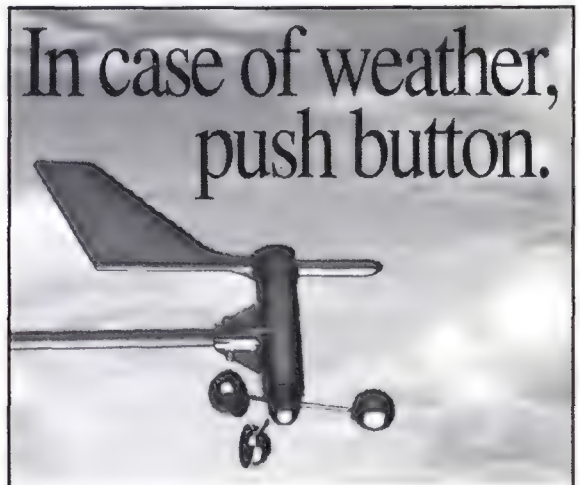

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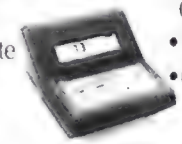

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newspapers for the next 40 years. But notoriety and a steady income would never settle him.

Bierce married Mary Ellen (Mollie) Day, a society woman, in the early 1870s. She was, he later told their daughter, the only woman he ever loved. Mollie would say the same of him. But they were too polite to tell each other. The marriage quickly assumed a distance that was never closed. Her father gave them a wedding trip to England. In London Bierce embarked on a literary career, adopting the habits of the Victorian husband—drinking at the club till dawn, leaving Mollie to raise their son, Day. Throughout the marriage, he drifted in and out of range, eventually moving away, then exploding when Mollie received letters from another man. What he didn't understand about women would have filled several books, but he confined his comments to his columns:

"A sweetheart is a bottle of wine; a wife is a wine bottle."

"**Marriage, n.** The state or condition of a community consisting of a master, a mistress and two slaves, making in all, two."

A warning to contemporary critics. Those who rush to judge all literature by modern standards, branding this writer racist, that one sexist, will get no apologies from Ambrose Bierce. To call him a misogynist is telling only half the story. He liked men no more than women, and his tall tales "Oil of Dog" and "A Cargo of Cat" make recent cat-joke books seem truly domestic. Any offense given by Bierce is purely intentional.

What, then, did Ambrose Bierce like? Throughout his life he liked long bicycle rides, and walks beneath the redwoods, where he gathered pinecones and arrowheads. He enjoyed fine wine and brandy in astonishing amounts. He liked to hold forth on literature and poetry while young writers listened. He favored wit over mere humor: "Humor is a sweet wine, wit a dry. We know which is preferred

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by the connoisseur." He liked to write late into the night, sleep half the day and brood the other half.

In 1875, Mollie returned to America with their two children. Once there, she sent word that she was expecting a third. Dutifully Bierce followed—a few months later. For the next 12 years Bierce had a variety of jobs, including a stint at gold mining. Mostly, he worked at newspapers, serving sometimes as editor, often hiring on as roving naysayer. By this time, San Francisco was in turmoil, with idle workers, restless mobs of Italians, Irish and Chinese in the streets, and increasing wealth in the hands of its millionaires. The railroad's Big Four had built mansions on Nob Hill, while soapbox orators shouted outside City Hall, and the Workingmen's Party threatened revolution.

For a cynic like Bierce there seemed no end to the corruption, the greed, the splendor of it all. In small papers like the aptly named *Wasp*, A. G. Bierce wrote a column called "Prattle" and prattled against the world. The initials "A. G.," said a fellow columnist, stood for "Almighty God," and godlike were his denunciations as his reputation grew.

"If nonsense were black, Sacramento would need gas lamps at noon-

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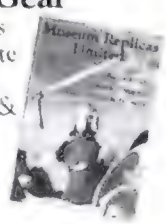

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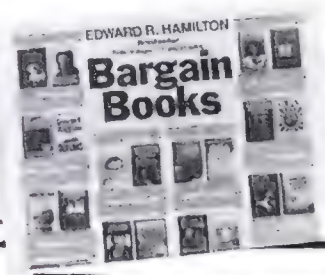

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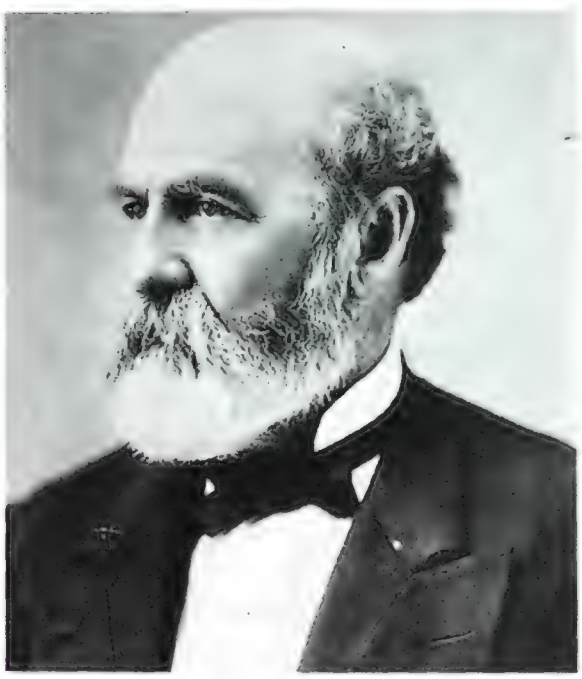

Bierce foiled "railrogue" Collis P. Huntington with unsparing wit.

He left papers with daughter, Helen, who said women were "chattels" to him.

day," he wrote of the State Legislature. "So scurvy a crew I do not remember to have discovered in vermiculose conspiracy outside the carcass of a dead horse." "Prattle" columns began "When I am dictator . . ." In "A Rational Anthem," which would echo throughout the age, he sang, "My country 'tis of thee, Sweet land of felony."

He had developed a theatrical persona. Striding the streets of San Francisco in derby and dapper three-piece suit, he carried a loaded Colt .45. Once, when a rival editor sent a death threat, "Prattle" calmly wrote that he would leave his office at a certain hour, walk up the right-hand side of Market Street and be ready for any hostilities. The editor chose to take a trip to Europe. Bierce's desk was graced by a skull and a cigar box. The skull was all that remained of a friend, he said with an icy stare, while the box contained the ashes of a fellow critic.

Bierce could have settled for the role of social critic and gadfly. But he would never settle for anything. In the late 1870s a gold rush began in the Black Hills of Dakota Territory, and Bierce, hoping gold would free him from the slavery of deadlines, signed on as a general agent in charge of mining operations. By the summer of 1880 he was hobnobbing with outlaws, miners and petty thieves. He once drove a wagon carrying $30,000 cash from Deadwood to Rockerville, while a companion, "Boone May, Murderer," rode shotgun. When the two were set upon by a bandit, Bierce, an otherwise austere father of three, drove on while May presumably blew the bandit away.

The company soon went broke, and Bierce, foiled again, returned to San Francisco. Dreams of real literary fame, of a contented life, were fading. Stories were fermenting in him, cold, clinical tales of war, spirits and grisly death. He had written a few, but the best were still years away. Unable to live in the city, its smoke and fog aggravating his asthma, he fled domestic life in favor of small hideaways in Northern California. Alone, pensive, he wielded the acid pen that still earned him a living.

When Bierce started at the *Wasp* in 1881, he added a new feature to his columns, wry definitions that mocked *Webster's*. For the next 25 years he played the devil's lexicographer. When the 1,000 definitions were later collected, *The Devil's Dictionary* was born. It is still in print. Some of the definitions, which frequently surface in modern journalism, seem to have been written yesterday:

"**Liar, n.** A lawyer with a roving commission."

"**Houseless, adj.** Having paid all taxes on household goods."

"**Senate, n.** A body of elderly gentlemen charged with high duties and misdemeanors."

"**Me, pro.** The objectionable case of I. The personal pronoun in English has three cases, the dominative, the objectionable and the oppressive. Each is all three."

Bierce grew so bitter that he could even wax nostalgic about the Civil War. A few essays set the mood for his first concerted attempts at fiction. His grim stories were rejected by East

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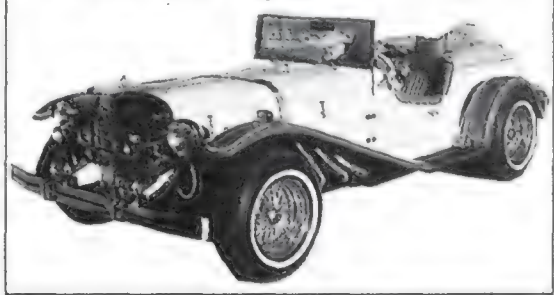

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Coast book publishers, leading Bierce to imagine vendettas against him by publishers who "drank wine from authors' skulls while authors are busy writing applications for admittance to the Poor House." But a friend collected the tales from local journals and published them as *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, and a second volume, *Can Such Things Be?*, appeared a few years later. The collections were praised for their realism, panned for their heartlessness. No less a personage than William Dean Howells said, "[He] is among our three greatest writers," to which Bierce replied, "I am sure Mr. Howells is the other two."

A typical Bierce mise-en-scène is "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." The story, later dramatized on Rod Serling's television series *The Twilight Zone*, tells of a Confederate spy condemned to hang. When the rope snaps at the fatal moment, he swims to freedom, dodging bullets and slashing through the underbrush. Winded, gasping, he sees the gates of his plantation, his wife reaching for him. Inches from her arms he feels a blow on his neck and, his dream over, his body sways "gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek Bridge." The lone struggle, fatalism and purple detail are pure Bierce.

Other Bierce characters succumb to the claws of the supernatural. The superstitious writer was haunted by recurring dreams and claimed to have met the ghost of an old friend on the street. His horror stories, owing something to Poe but still radically different from those of their time, are infested with apparitions, invisible monsters, predestination and an endless array of gruesome demises. For one who had so narrowly escaped death, the Grim Reaper was a prankster, and mortality, the final joke. "Having murdered my mother under circumstances of singular atrocity . . ." begins one story. "Early one June morning in 1872 I murdered my father—an act which made a deep impression on me at the time . . ." begins another. Bierce at his bitterest is an acquired taste.

Critics were divided, but with the publication of his stories, aspiring writers on the West Coast flocked to him. He tolerated few human foibles, but he was generous of his time with young talent, reading hundreds of manuscripts and welcoming literary pilgrims to his hillside home. Many called him "Dear Master," and those he praised in his columns gained sudden, if temporary, fame.

In newspapers, Bierce continued his carefully crafted attacks, among them the shortest book review on record: "The covers of this book are too far apart." He might have continued modestly employed had not an ambitious Harvard dropout appeared on his doorstep in the spring of 1887.

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Opening the door, Bierce found "a young man, the youngest young man, it seemed to me, that I had ever confronted. . . .

" 'I am from the San Francisco *Examiner*' he explained in a voice like the fragrance of violets made audible, and backed a little away.

" 'Oh,' I said, 'you come from Mr. Hearst.'

"Then that unearthly child lifted its blue eyes and cooed, 'I am Mr. Hearst.' "

William Randolph Hearst had just taken control of his father's newspaper and was already attracting West Coast talent with his promise of a new journalism, "alarmingly enterprising" and "startlingly original." He offered to put "Prattle" uncut on the *Examiner* editorial page every Sunday. Though suspicious of Hearst and his ambitions, Bierce accepted. "I persuaded myself that I could do more good by addressing those who had greatest need of me—the millions of readers to whom Mr. Hearst was a misleading light."

Thus began a journalistic courtship of 20 years. Bierce quit the *Examiner* semiannually, protesting Hearst's pomposity or cuts in his column, but he always returned, often with a raise. The two differed in temperament and on many issues, notably the Spanish-American War, against which Bierce waged a lone editorial protest. But personalities aside, Bierce's literary style fit Hearst's like a sword in a sheath. With a wider audience, Bierce blasted away, criticizing anyone and everything from John L. Sullivan, Edison, Tolstoy and Dickens to Santa Claus. His favorite targets were the railroads that were then wrapping their tentacles around California's public lands.

The Southern Pacific arrived so late, Bierce wrote, that "the passenger is exposed to the perils of senility." He called the robber barons "railrogues," and Leland Stanford either " £eland Stanford" or "Stealand Landford." Perhaps Bierce's finest hour in journalism came at the expense of one such railrogue.

In February 1896, Hearst sent Bierce on a mission to Washington, D.C. The funding bill then before Congress would have given Collis P. Huntington's Southern Pacific 83 years to pay off $75 million borrowed from the federal government. There seemed little chance of defeating the powerful railroad lobby unless the East Coast establishment, which considered the matter a California affair, could be aroused.

Always ready for a fight, Bierce arrived in Washington and sharpened his wit. Writing for the *Examiner* and Hearst's New York *Journal*, he took aim. Collis P. Huntington, "this inflated old pigskin," would propose to the Senate "that the negative be stricken out of the commandment

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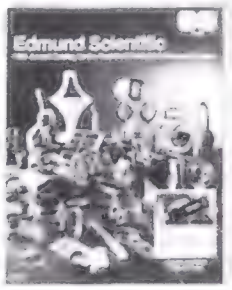

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'Thou shalt *not* steal.'" Huntington, "the Swine of the Century . . . deserves to hang from every branch of every tree of every State and Territory penetrated by his railroads." Bierce once offered to shake hands with Huntington. "I exact but one condition," he added. "Mr. Huntington is not to object to my glove."

Huntington lobbied the Congress. Bierce lobbied the public. The battle raged. When the two finally met on the steps of the Capitol, observers feared fisticuffs. Bierce stepped aside, but the bald tycoon cornered him. Every man has his price, Huntington said. How much would Bierce demand to cease and desist? Bierce said nothing. "Name your price!" Huntington shouted. "My price," Bierce boomed, "is 75 million dollars! . . . You may hand it over to my friend, the Treasurer of the United States!" Silenced, Huntington backed off.

After a long, hot summer Bierce returned to California, his job done. Two hundred thousand signatures on a petition against the funding bill helped to defeat it. A few years later, when the Southern Pacific was given ten years to pay its debts, Bierce's victory was cited as the first salvo fired by the muckrakers.

He had cut the railroad down to size and made his name as well known in the East as it had been in the West. A few years later Teddy Roosevelt would personally tell Bierce that his story "A Son of the Gods" had inspired the charge up San Juan Hill. Then, if ever, Bierce's literary career should have been complete. But Bierce never tallied his pluses. He scored all humanity, including himself, in red ink, and sensed his perilous place in letters. Despite what was becoming a towering reputation in West Coast journalism, he seemed to court his own obscurity:

"My how my fame rings out in every zone/A thousand critics shouting 'He's unknown!'"

Bierce had judged his own life a tragedy, and so tragedy came.

Though an absentee father at best, Bierce was idolized by his sons. Both became journalists, briefly. Bierce bellowed when his elder son, Day, left home at age 15 to work for a paper in Northern California. A year later, a telegram summoned Bierce to the hospital. Feeling betrayed by a young woman who married his best friend, Day had flown into a rage, shot the friend, then himself. "Send for my father," Day moaned, but he died before his father arrived. For weeks Bierce carried the murder weapon. In 1901 Bierce's other son, Leigh, died of pneumonia. He was 27. Bierce's telegram to friends was terse, but for years afterward he kept count of the days since this second loss.

Day's death and the breakup of his faltering marriage sent Bierce into a tailspin. His new philosophy: "Nothing matters." Aging, tired and back to small targets, Bierce wrote philippics on literature, suffragism and the demise of civilization, but his tirades found few readers as the optimism of a new century held forth. Quietly, Bierce gathered his definitions and edited his collected works. The country, he said, was "a gone-mad democracy" moving toward socialism, women's equality and prohibition, and he wanted no part of it.

Bierce broke with Hearst in 1908.

In Mexico, he aimed to find rebels Pancho Villa (left) and Emiliano Zapata.

Gregory Peck played him as a crack shot and a boozer in *Old Gringo*.

He drifted between Washington and San Francisco, spending most of his time in the capital's Army and Navy Club. He quarreled with old friends and grew indifferent to his future. "My work is finished," he wrote to a friend, "and so am I." Then a revolution broke out in Mexico, and he began to fashion one final story.

"I'm going back to Washington and make preparations to leave," he told his daughter, Helen. "I'm going to buy a donkey and hire a peon . . . This fighting in Mexico interests me. I want to go down and see if these Mexicans shoot straight!" He was quite cheerful about the plan, Helen said.

Cynics passing judgment on one of their own see suicide in Bierce's denouement. Yet letters suggest that stops in South America were in his itinerary, and ultimately, a trip to England. A still closer examination of his route and his demeanor reveals another destination—his past.

Bidding goodbye to Helen and friends, Bierce set out from Washington for Mexico in October 1913. His train took him first to Civil War battlefields in the South. Old and asthmatic, he somehow found the strength to climb Missionary Ridge under a hot sun. He walked 15 miles over the fields at Chickamauga. At Shiloh he spent three days finding the graves of comrades. Only then did he move on to the border.

Mexico was in revolt. The country's roads were clogged with refugees, its train service disrupted, its wealthy ranchos under siege. Prisoners were routinely shot by both sides. Though suspicious at first, rebel authorities gave the "old gringo" a pass to enter as an observer. Sensing distrust, Bierce climbed to the top of a ridge, unlimbered his rifle and picked off a government soldier. He was given a sombrero. Moving deeper into the fighting, he reached Chihuahua City. He was last heard from in December 1913, bound for Ojinaga, to which Pancho Villa would soon lay siege. "Pray for me," he wrote a friend. "Real loud."

Bierce's disappearance made national headlines and led to a flurry of rumors. He had been 1) shot by Pancho Villa; 2) shot by opposing General Carranza; 3) seen transporting a machine gun in 1915; 4) killed in Villa's siege of Ojinaga. The mystery subjected his reputation to more fame than he would have liked. One of the earliest stories was a press report that he had secretly gone to England and was advising the war minister, Lord Kitchener. Mediums tried to summon up Bierce's spirit. By the 1930s, wild theories about his internment in an insane asylum had emerged. But federal investigations and many searches by eager journalists over the years have turned up only loose ends. Ambrose Bierce (1842-1914?) is still missing.

"Death is not the end," Bierce once remarked. "There remains the litigation over the estate." The value of Bierce's literary estate is controversial. His Civil War stories are often anthologized, and his aphorisms are essential in collections of curmudgeonry, but he was outclassed by contemporaries like Mark Twain, Henry James, William Dean Howells, even Jack London. Serious critics, however, have given him

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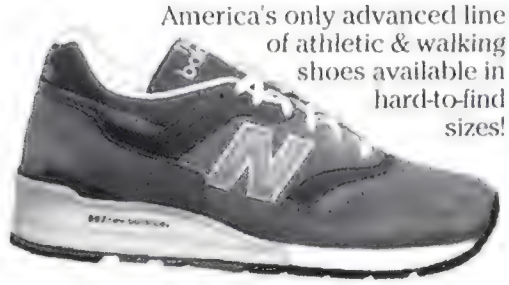

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no more than a nod. Death "was his only real character," Edmund Wilson wrote, and Clifton Fadiman called him "a minor prophet of hopelessness."

Bierce's works endure through the interest of aficionados of wit and revelers in the outré. Ask a hundred readers about him, and 95 will shrug. But the other five will have read him cover to cover. And whenever decadence flourishes, Ambrose Bierce rises to haunt the optimists.

In this age of stretch limos, designer this-and-that, trash TV and one "—gate" scandal after another, something like Bierce's cynicism is again in vogue. Volumes of his collected stories and his Civil War stories have been reissued in recent years. The most recent resurrection came in the novel and film *Old Gringo*. Opposite Jane Fonda, Gregory Peck played the wheezing, heavy-drinking "Bitter" during his final days in Mexico, riding on horseback looking for Villa, lamenting his life and telling his tale of Owl Creek Bridge around a campfire. The film presented a bowdlerized Bierce, yet it introduced an old cynic to a new generation. *Old Gringo* has brought a greater stream of visitors to the Ambrose Bierce House, now a bed-and-breakfast in St. Helena, California; and a street in San Francisco was recently named for him.

He "will speak to us with added vehemence," Clifton Fadiman once wrote, when "the time of the pessimists has come again." Ample targets exist today, yet against Bierce's eloquence, wit and instinct for the jugular, modern cynics pale. At best, a Bierce of our time would wind up as a scurrilous radio talk-show host or a writer for *Saturday Night Live*.

Bierce wrote no epitaph. His final "Town Crier" column will have to do:

"Be as decent as you can. Don't believe without evidence. Treat things divine with marked respect—don't have anything to do with them. Do not trust humanity without collateral security. . . . endeavor to see things as they are, not as they ought to be."

In 1913, before his disappearance, Bierce (right) joins friends in a sentimental journey to battlefields of the Civil War.

Book reviews

Since You Went Away
Edited by Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith
Oxford University Press, $24.95

On the Front Lines
John Ellis
John Wiley and Sons, $15.95

Kay McReynolds and Jim McKemy knew each other while growing up in the little town of Trenton, Missouri, but they didn't start going together until Kay was a college sophomore and Jim was out of school and about to become a naval officer. That was in 1943, a particularly unfortunate year to start a romance—World War II made few allowances for love. Kay, like most women in that era that now seems so terribly long ago, poured her heart and soul into the letters she wrote to Jim.

"When I do get a letter from you," she wrote when he'd been gone only a few weeks, "I tear it open and read it so fast that it's all gone in just a minute. I think I'll start rationing myself to one paragraph an hour. You can depend on each letter you write getting itself read 'a million or more times.'"

Kay and Jim became engaged shortly before he was sent to the Pacific as a supply officer in 1944, and for most of the next two years they did what hundreds of thousands of other young couples did—kept their romance alive by mail. Like everyone else, Kay had friends who lost their men in the war: "It's a wonder we aren't old women," she wrote. On the contrary, she was young enough to believe, when the war ended in August 1945, that "maybe our children will never have to know what war is. . . . Good *does* triumph over evil."

The poignant innocence reflected in Kay's V-J Day conclusion pervades *Since You Went Away*, the collection of letters written by American women during the war and now assembled by Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith. The editors achieved a remarkable feat in retrieving these fascinating and often heartbreaking letters. Starting with queries sent to 1,400 newspapers, they amassed 25,000 letters from 400 women. Some had been preserved because the servicemen wrote on the blank sides of the letters they received; others were sent home in K-ration boxes.

The letters illuminate a time when sex roles were first showing the changes that would culminate in the women's

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movement. "I must admit I'm not exactly the same girl you left," Edith Speert wrote to her husband, Victor, in 1945. "I'm twice as independent as I used to be, and I sometimes think I've become hard as nails. I don't think my changes will affect our relationship," she went on. Speert and more than six million other American women entered the work force during the war. Later she forewarned that "many a night you will cook the supper. . . . Also, dearest—I shall never wash and iron—there are laundries for that!"

In the end, it is the small human dramas in these letters that stand out. Anne Gudis, miffed to distraction by her soldier-swain Sam Kramer, writes what may be the shortest Dear John on record: "Mr. Kramer: Go to hell! With love, Anne Gudis." A woman working at a Honolulu nightclub assures a pilot that she'll wait for him—until she's 20. The wife of an Air Corps navigator reads in a news story that only 15 of 1,500 Allied bombers were lost in a raid over Europe and later learns that her husband died in one of the 15. And a grieving mother whose son died in the Pacific asks Gen. Douglas MacArthur, in desperation, "Please general he was a good boy, wasn't he? Did he die a hard death?"

John Ellis' *On the Front Lines*, an updated edition of a book originally published in 1980, tells us what life and death were like at the receiving end of the letters. What's surprising here is not so much the neglect, misery and fear that combat soldiers were heir to, but the eloquence in these from-the-trenches views of the trooper's lot. Here's an artilleryman describing an infantry advance: they "walked slowly up the road towards the enemy, with the same bored indifference of a man who goes to a work he does not love. . . . Men move slowly against death. . . ."

Indeed it was fear and the acknowledgment of it that bound these men together in the brotherhood of combat, a tie as strong as—or stronger than—their love for the women back home. The women probably would have been shocked to learn that frontline soldiers, who fight and die not for country or cause but for one another, shared everything. "If one man gets a letter from home the whole company reads it," a GI wrote. "Whatever belongs to me belongs to the whole outfit."

Real heroism, Dwight Eisenhower wrote in a wartime letter to journalist Ernie Pyle, is the "uncomplaining ac-

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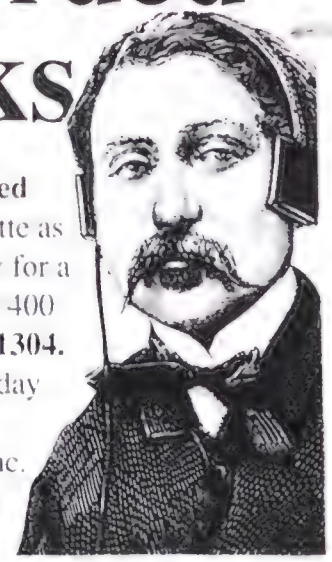

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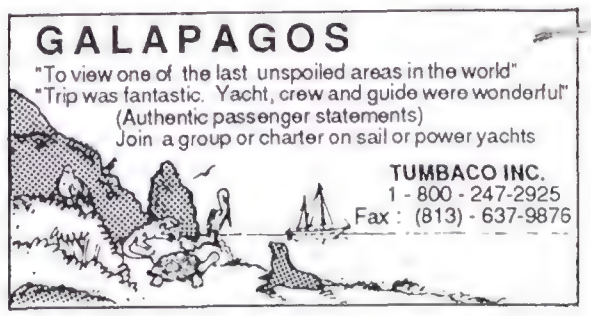

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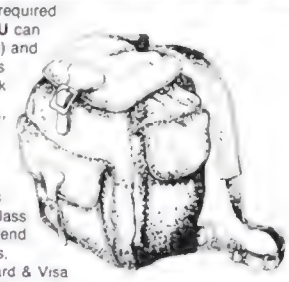

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ceptance of unendurable conditions," and it is this gritty reality that Ellis depicts—mud, flies, the hideous noise of incoming shells, exhaustion past all description, and the awful realization that each man is ultimately a replaceable part of a soulless killing machine.

The renowned chroniclers of foxhole life are included here, writers like Pyle and Bill Mauldin, but so are soldiers who fought and wrote about it and then vanished into anonymity, men like Captain M. Howard of the British 3rd Coldstream Guards. Describing the experience of being under artillery fire, Howard wrote of "air suddenly expanding in a great annihilating wave," followed by a "sinister silence when all the world is still, and you feel suddenly released from the panic-stricken fluttering inside your ribs."

Though he lapses too often into statistics, Ellis manages to convey the feel of combat through the accumulation of such vivid firsthand descriptions. I'd hope that veterans would agree. I'm sure that most of them would concur with a bit of infantryman's doggerel that Ellis retrieved from World War I: "Though we observe the Higher Law / And though we have our quarrel just, / Were I permitted to withdraw / You wouldn't see my arse for dust."
Peacetime soldier *Donald Dale Jackson* remembers the importance of mail.

California's Daughter:
Gertrude Atherton and Her Times
Emily Wortis Leider
Stanford University Press, $24.95

Ambrose Bierce would have none of it. "A woman may live out half her life, a bright . . . companionable creature, then take to writing for the newspapers and become a sore trial," he wrote in 1891 in his "Prattle" column for the San Francisco *Examiner*. Was he thinking of Gertrude Atherton, San Francisco woman of letters and New Woman par excellence? Atherton, with whom Bierce (see page 103) enjoyed a stormy friendship verging on romance, was not daunted: "Do you mean anyone in particular—me for instance?"

No doubt Gertrude Atherton could be a sore trial, but then she almost had to be. Gertrude Franklin Horn was born in 1857 in San Francisco's fashionable Rincon Hill area, where female ambition of any kind was regarded as highly improper and literary ambition as disreputable as singing in public.

Here, Atherton was a complete misfit. But, she was fiercely determined to carve her own place in American literature. When she died at the age of 91, Atherton had some 50 books to her credit, as well as mountains of articles. In Europe during the 1920s her books outsold those of Edith Wharton and Sinclair Lewis. Her novel *Black Oxen*, a story of the sexual reawakening of an older woman, reached first place on the *Publishers Weekly* best-seller list in 1923. She was elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters in 1938; she founded the San Francisco branch of the international literary organization PEN.

Today, few people recall any of this. The fame Gertrude Atherton so desperately coveted turned out to be highly transitory. Her driven productivity provides part of the reason. She felt she was shirking if she produced only one book a year, and rarely bothered to reflect or revise. Now she is of interest mainly

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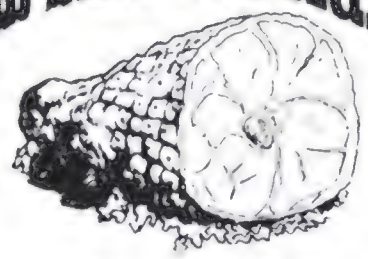

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to students of regional literature and feminist history. It is a shame. Over her long life and many travels, Atherton's busy path brought her into contact with notables of every stripe—from Mabel Dodge to Henry James (with whom she tried unsuccessfully to flirt).

It is, then, greatly to the credit of Emily Wortis Leider, an associate editor with the *San Francisco Review of Books*, that she has undertaken to rescue Gertrude Atherton from obscurity. She has carried out her task with intelligence, humor and honesty.

Atherton's own family background was not much to boast of. Her father was a failed tobacco merchant, her mother a displaced Southern belle. Her primary claim to social standing came from her marriage in 1876 to George Henry Bowen Atherton, the son of a California land baron. George had intended to marry Gertrude's twice-divorced mother; he ended up running off with the daughter.

She made an appalling wife and mother, preferring to devote herself to writing. Her two children were turned over to nursemaids and grandmother. Atherton was delivered from the chains of marriage at 29, when the hapless George died at sea en route to Chile.

She set off for New York to knock on the doors of agents and publishers. The East Coast establishment failed to appreciate her West Coast unconventionality. She moved on to Britain, beginning a life of restless travel. Everywhere she remained the outsider—the eternal spectator. In her 60s, she returned to California. It was her best setting.

She saw her heroines as embodiments of the West's pioneer spirit. Often they were thinly veiled, idealized versions of herself—courageous, seductive and iconoclastic. In 1889, the *New York World* insisted that her novel *Hermia Suydam* cried out for a policeman, not a critic. With *Patience Sparhawk*, a novel of sexual emancipation, she broke new ground.

"In the waning twentieth century, feminists want role models," writes Leider, "and Atherton does not always make an attractive one." This is true. She had the sensitivities of a steamroller, and her views were a tangle of contradictions. She championed women's rights but despised the majority of women for their weakness. Atherton divided the female sex into the brilliant and the bovine—guess how she saw herself.

Helle Bering-Jensen is a doctoral candidate in American Studies.

Additional reading

Catacombs (p. 28)

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William Harnett (p. 52)

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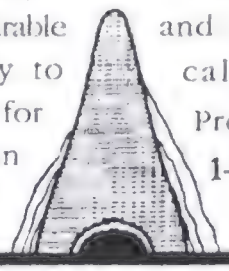

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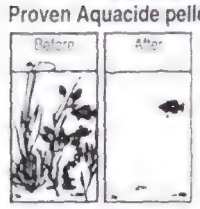

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Begin your visit at the Smithsonian Information Center, located in the Castle. Hours are 9 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. daily.

Freer remains closed

The Freer Gallery of Art is closed until early 1993.

Washington Craft Show

The tenth annual Washington Craft Show, sponsored by the Women's Committee of the Smithsonian Associates, will be held April 23-26 in the Departmental Auditorium, 1301 Constitution Avenue, N.W., across from the National Museum of American History. One hundred artists will exhibit and sell work in a variety of media. There will be an admission charge. Call (202) 357-2700.

In conjunction with the Craft Show, the James Renwick Alliance will offer its annual spring forum April 25-26. For details, call Shelley Gollust, (301) 229-2148.

Musical Weekend

This year's Smithsonian Musical Weekend will be held May 1-3. Festivities include a National Symphony Orchestra concert at the Kennedy Center; a performance by the Smithsonian Chamber Players; tea and music at the French

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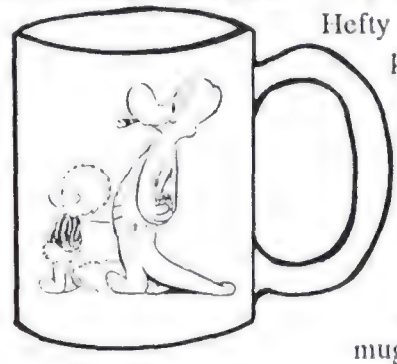

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Special March exhibits and events

National Museum of American Art
Between Home and Heaven: Contemporary American Landscape Photography (March 6-June 28) Works portray the art and beauty of the land as well as the consequences of development. See *Highlights continued*, page 125.

Renwick Gallery
John McQueen: The Language of Containment (March 20-July 26) Exhibition of 31 baskets by one of America's most important craftsmen.

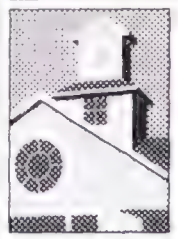
National Portrait Gallery
Poster Portraits (March 27-August 16) Posters from the gallery's collection feature politicians, athletes, stars.
The Levy-Franks Family Colonial Portraits (through May 31) Seven portraits of a leading family of the New York Jewish community in the 18th century.

Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden
Martin Puryear (through May 10) Exhibit traces the sculptor's artistic development from early 1970s to the present.
Directions—Francesc Torres (through May 3) Multimedia installation by the Spanish-born, New York-based artist incorporates his reflections on war.

National Museum of Natural History
Seeds of Change (through April 1, 1993) Exhibit explores dramatic changes brought about by the exchange, begun 500 years ago, of five "seeds" between the Old and New Worlds.
The All-American Horse: Paintings of G. Harvey (through September 7) An homage to the historic role of the horse in North America.

National Museum of American History
First Ladies: Political Role and Public Image (opens March 29) New exhibition features Smithsonian's historic gown collection. See *Around the Mall*, page 22.
Joyful Noise (through March 29) Photographs by Michael P. Smith document New Orleans street music.

National Air and Space Museum
Star Trek (through September 7) Show marking the 25th anniversary of the famed television series examines the



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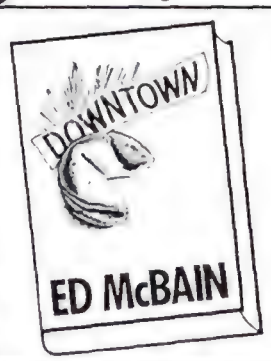

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National Museum of African Art
Purpose and Perfection: Pottery as a Woman's Art in Central Africa New permanent exhibition features the museum's Central African pottery collection. *Between Man and the Gods: Sacrifice and Ceremony on a Cast Metal Ring* (through September 7) Centuries-old cast metal ring from Nigeria.

Arthur M. Sackler Gallery
When Kingship Descended from Heaven: Masterpieces of Mesopotamian Art from the Louvre (March 8-August 9) Loan exhibition presents some of the world's most celebrated works of art.

Anacostia Museum
To Achieve These Rights: The Struggle for Equality and Self-Determination in the District of Columbia, 1791-1978 (through July 26) Exhibit examines the struggle by black people to secure equal rights in the nation's capital.

Arts and Industries Building Experimental Gallery
Etiquette of the Undercaste (through April 15) The Antenna Theater of Sausalito, California, presents an exhibition to aid in the understanding of the homeless.

Cooper-Hewitt Museum (New York)
The Cooper-Hewitt Collections: A Design Resource (through August) Some 1,200 objects chronicle the history and collecting philosophy of one of the most important repositories of design.

National Museum of the American Indian (New York)
Weaving a Mayan Heritage: Clothing by Juana Cavanaugh (March 18-July 12) Handmade textiles from Guatemala. *Indians as Children See Them* (through April 19) Juried show of children's art from New York City's public schools.

Exhibition catalogs

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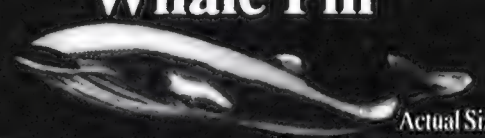

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Folk Masters: Traditional Music in the Americas Series of one-hour radio programs features award-winning performers recorded live at Carnegie Hall. Check local public radio listings.

Smithsonian National Associates

The National Associate Program U.S. and International Events will visit Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, this month. Events in Madison (April 8-12) will include creating a family cookbook and exploring African textiles. The Milwaukee program (April 8-12) will feature highlights of NASM.

Associates in these cities will receive brochure invitations. For further information, write or call U.S. and International Events Program, 490 L'Enfant Plaza, S.W., Suite 4210, Washington, D.C. 20560; (202) 287-3210.

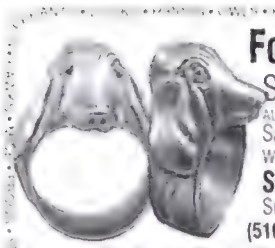
Resident Associate Program

To become a Resident Associate, or for fee and ticket information, call (202) 357-3030. March events include:
Roberts-Marsalis: Duo Pianorama (March 14; 6 P.M. and 8:30 P.M.) Jazz pianists Marcus Roberts and Ellis Marsalis.
Rosemary Clooney (March 5; 7:30 P.M.) The legendary "girl singer."
Come Fly a Kite Festival (March 28; 11 A.M. to 2 P.M.; rain date, March 29)

Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service

SITES organizes and circulates exhibitions to cities throughout the United States and abroad. To sponsor a show in your community, write SITES, Smithsonian, Washington, D.C. 20560. Here are some March exhibits:

- Muncie, Indiana (March 21-July 5) *Perpetual Campaign: The Making of the People's President*, Minnetrista Cultural Center.
- Ponce, Puerto Rico (March 21-May 3) *Art as Activist: Revolutionary Posters from Central and Eastern Europe*, Ponce Museum of Art.



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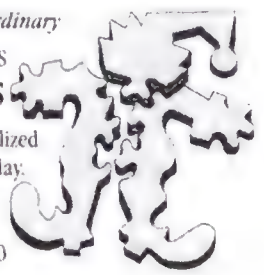

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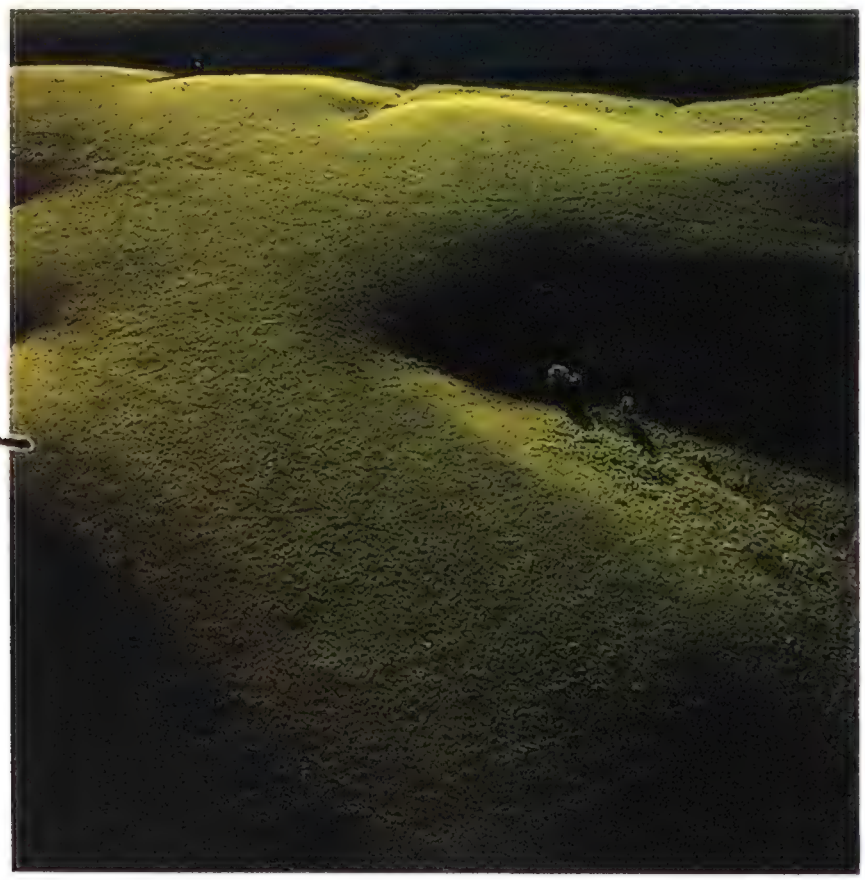
A new look at the American landscape

"Landscape has always been a subject compatible with the medium of photography. In its ability to note the particularities of place as well as the atmospheric fullness of space, the medium distinguished itself early as an important chronicler of the American myth of the land." So writes curator Merry A. Foresta in the catalog that accompanies "Between Home and Heaven: Contemporary American Landscape Photography," an exhibition of 131 works on view at the National Museum of American Art from March 6 through June 28.

What defines the group of photographers represented in this show is the way in which they have come to terms with and portrayed an occupied, altered landscape—a landscape that has been cultivated, developed, built upon or ravaged—a landscape where it is hard to escape the hand of Man.

"Not since the middle of the 19th century has the question of what we are doing with our land been so central to interpretation by a generation of photographers," says Foresta. Less record-keepers than artists, these photographers are engaged not only in revealing art and patterns in the landscape but in depicting the consequences of modern development on the land. Their work reflects a more sophisticated understanding of how humanity and nature interact and embodies a new brand of romanticism—part pastoral, part irony. This exhibit "is about the pleasure and necessity of paying more attention to the land," Foresta says, "to know where we are, to think about where we are heading."
Diane M. Bolz



Of the prairie, photographer Terry Evans writes, "I was observing a profound mystery that was closer to heaven than to home." In *Konza Prairie* (above) she captures the sculpture of cultivated prairie. Evidence of mankind is counterpoint to nature in Len Jenshel's *Monument Valley, Navajo Tribal Park, Arizona* (above, right) and his *Great Basin National Park, Nevada* (right). Gus Foster's 363-degree panorama *Cut Wheat* (below) distorts natural scene.

The Smithsonian Traveler

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Grand Canyon *May 7-10 or September 24-27*

Bryce, Zion and the North Rim *May 9-18*

Hudson River Valley *May 10-15*

Smithsonian Treasures *May 13-17* Behind-the-scenes tours for Contributing Members.

Hawaii Camping *May 16-30*

Sojourn in Sedona (Arizona) *May 21-27*

Native Cultures of the Southwest *May 26-June 6*

Grand Canyon Rafting *May 29-June 7*

Smoky Mountains *May 30-June 7*

Chicago Architecture *June 17-21*

California's National Parks *June 20-28*

Frank Lloyd Wright's Wisconsin *June 21-26*

Alaska *June 25-July 7 or July 9-21*

Alaska Cruise *June 27-July 4*

Railroading the Rockies *July 10-18 or August 7-15*

Pueblo Indians *July 11-19*

Oregon *July 12-19* Natural history.

Colorado for Families *July 18-24*

Black Hills to the Tetons *July 20-30*

Foreign Study Tours

Countryside Tours *May-October* Sojourns in France, England, Wales, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Mexico.

Russia's Golden Ring *May 3-16*

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Gardens of Northern Italy *May 13-24*

Western Turkey *May 13-28*

Spain *May 13-29*

Denmark *May 20-June 2*

Mexico's Copper Canyon *May 24-30*

Dutch Houses and Gardens *May 28-June 8*

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Pyrenees (France and Spain) *June 5-15*

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Inside Ireland *June 13-24*

Walks in the French Alps *June 14-27*

Turkey Cruise *June 14-30* On the *Sea Cloud*.

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Landscape Design *May 3-7*

Inside Congress *May 4-7*

USSR Update *May 6-9*

Write to Smithsonian National Associate Program, Washington, DC 20560 or call (202) 357-4700 for tour and seminar brochures.

SMITHSONIAN-STYLE

Civil War in Gettysburg *May 6-9*

The New Astronomies (Tucson) *May 10-15 and May 17-23*

The News Media *May 13-16*

Greece *May 22-June 4*

Southwest Archaeology (Santa Fe) *May 25-29*

Interior Design (New York) *May 31-June 3*

Yellowstone Ecology (Wyoming) *June 1-7*

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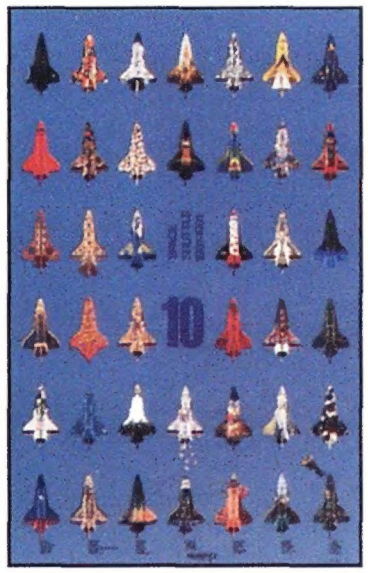

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By Israel Shenker

Breakfast takes the cake—and gives it, as well

My feelings about breakfast can be summed up in five words: all happiness depends on it. In my teens I was bugler at summer camp and tried subversively to advance the sounding of reveille in order to hasten the hour of mess call. Later, traveling by sea or train, I unabashedly headed each day's queue for breakfast. At home and abroad, the order of the day is to pitch in, and I would sooner miss four rounds of Halley's comet than one bout of breakfast.

When I stayed at an inn at Ftan, in Switzerland's Lower Engadine, breakfast was served by a waiter who hailed from Yugoslavia. As he served, he muttered the menu in German: "*Brot, Butter, Kaffee, Milch, Konfitüren, Käse, Zucker, Honig—alles!*" Outside reigned an almost palpable silence—dry air and a glittering panorama as the sun lit up the peaks. With deliberate care I shunned the view and fell to. Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, and to consume was very heaven.

In Israel, a kibbutz breakfast includes a self-service array that combines the finest elements of lunch and dinner, as well. The one complaint I still harbor is that I have never been offered blintzes at breakfast. One day my blintz will come.

In Britain, where I draw rations, there have been many health scares—the eggs had salmonella, the cattle had Mad Cow disease, the Health Minister talked too much. None of this deterred me from devotion to eggs and bacon, the Englishman's patriotic dish. Novelist and playwright A. P. Herbert composed a ballad to bacon and eggs, part of which went like this:

> Bacon and eggs,
> Bacon and eggs;
> Sing bacon,
> Red bacon,
> Red bacon and eggs!

Lunch and dinner may not be much to boast about in Britain, but breakfast takes the cake—and gives it, as well. Somerset Maugham maintained that the way to eat well here was to eat breakfast three times a day.

Sir Walter Scott made breakfast the meal of the day, having (alas) done most of his work before he set to. Anthony Trollope, too, began the day by writing before breakfast. And when he set himself to describing breakfast at Plumstead Episcopi, the tea was "the very best, the coffee the very blackest, the cream the very thickest; there was dry toast and buttered toast, muffins and crumpets, hot bread and cold bread, white bread and brown bread, home-made bread and bakers' bread, wheaten bread and oaten bread; and if there be other breads than these, they were there; there were eggs in napkins, and crispy bits of bacon under silver covers; and there were little fishes in a little box, and devilled kidneys frizzling on a hot-water dish." And of course there was "a huge ham and a huge sirloin."

Such a breakfast—any breakfast, for that matter—is too important to share with others. When he became a fellow of an Oxford college in middle life, poetry professor Adam Fox was chagrined to find that instead of having breakfast in their own rooms, dons were expected to have it in the common room. He called it "a shock [and a grisly practice] from which I never really recovered all the twelve years I was at Magdalen."

Egg-and-bacon lover Herbert warned that "the critical period in matrimony is breakfast time." I was chatting not long ago with Scotland's Lady Macdonald, whose husband is chief of the clan, and she told me: "I'm married to someone who loathes to speak to anyone at breakfast—including me." Now, there's a man I could happily break bread with—and the sound of bread breaking would be the closest thing to communication between us.

If I have any claim to the gratitude of the upper classes, it is thanks to my influence on how breakfast is served at the Savoy in London. Shown to a table one morning, I saw before me a tiny plate, just large enough for a croissant. All the other tables were set identically. As croissant succeeded brioche succeeded toast, the tablecloth around my plate grew increasingly encrumbered. After breakfast I labored to the manager's office. "Breakfast was lovely," I began, and then intimated that the plates were small. The next morning, places at every table—dreams of grandeur!—were set with large plates.

In the hardier age that preceded our own, Hibernians put a slab of solid, cold porridge into a drawer and hacked off slices whenever they felt peckish. The proprietor of a tony hotel in Devon tells me that at breakfast he serves clients porridge seasoned not only with Demerara sugar but also with whisky. In Britain the custom of spirits with breakfast is venerable. Author Tobias Smollett told of a Highland breakfast that included eggs, butter, cream, cheese, honey, ham, venison, oatcakes, bannocks, bread—and "a large stone bottle full of whisky; another of brandy, and a kilderkin of ale." A kilderkin of ale was traditionally about 16 gallons.

When kippers disappeared from the breakfast menu on the railway train known as the Brighton Belle, Laurence Olivier wrote a letter of complaint to the *Times*. It did not take long till he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Olivier. You may think that was for services to dramaturgy. I know better.

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